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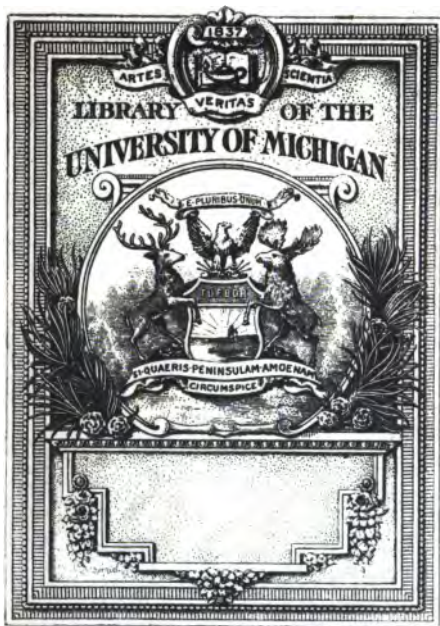
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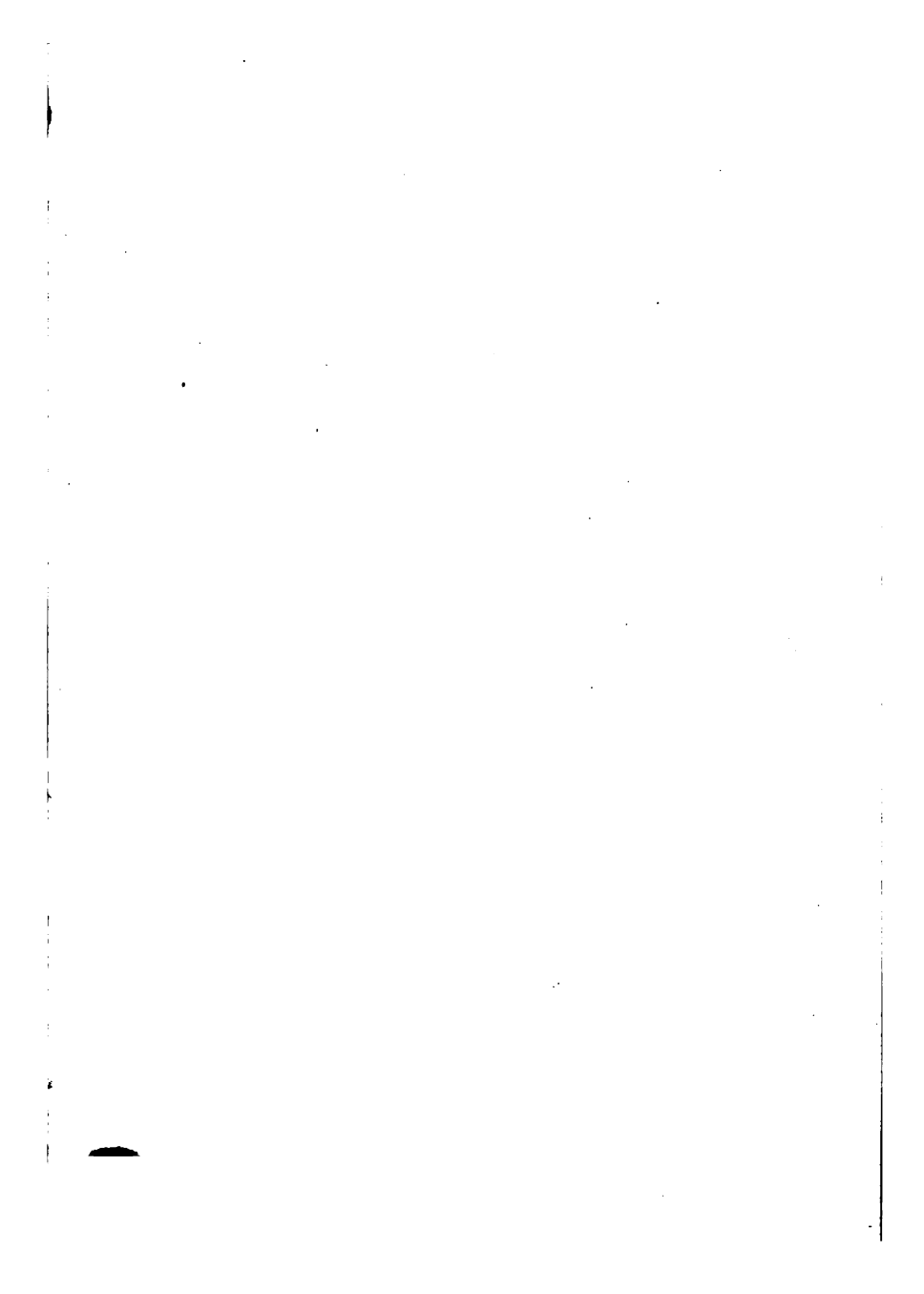
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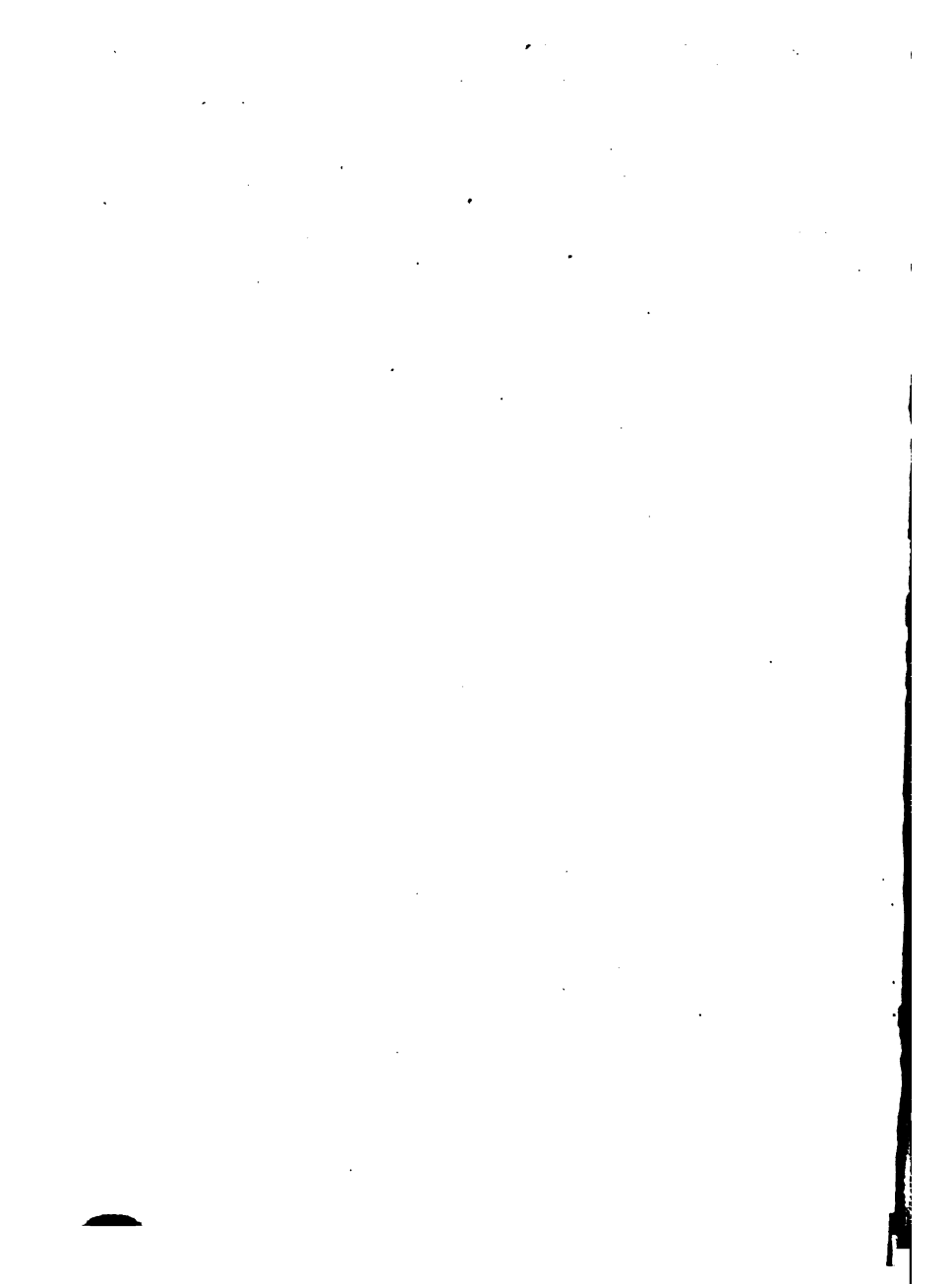
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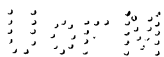
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IS HE POPENJOY?







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IS HE POPENJOY?

A NOVEL

BY

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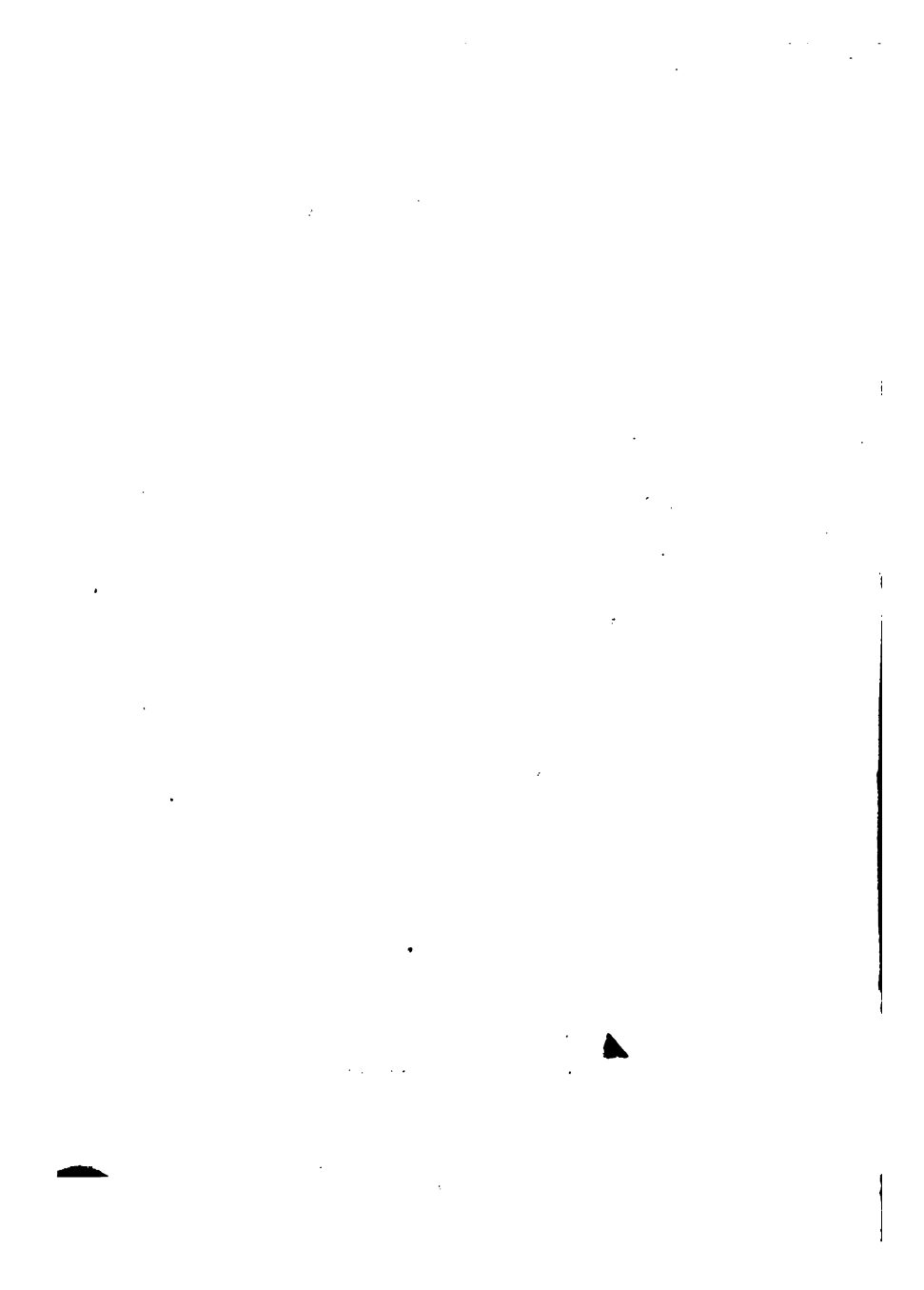
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Is He Popenjoy?

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN DE BARON

OF course as the next day or two passed by, the condition of Mrs. Houghton was discussed between Lord George and his wife. The affair could not be passed over without further speech. "I am quite contented with you," he said; "more than contented. But I suppose she does not feel herself contented with Mr. Houghton."

"Then why did she marry him?"

"Ah! why indeed?"

"A woman ought to be contented with her husband. But, at any rate, what right can she have to disturb other people? I suppose you never wrote her a love-letter."

"Never, certainly—since her marriage." This indeed was true. The lady had frequently written to him, but he had warily kept his hands from pen and ink, and had answered her letters by going to her.

"And yet she could persevere! Women can do such mean things! I would sooner have broken my heart and died than have asked a man to say that he loved me. I don't suppose you have much to be proud of. I daresay she has half-a-dozen others. You won't see her again?"

"I think I may be driven to do so. I do not wish to have to write to her, and yet I must make her understand that all this is to be over."

"She'll understand that fast enough when she does

not see you. It would have served her right to have sent that letter to her husband."

"That would have been cruel, Mary."

"I didn't do it. I thought of doing it, and wouldn't do it. But it would have served her right. I suppose she was always writing."

"She has written, but not quite like that," said Lord George. He was not altogether comfortable during this conversation.

"She writes lots of such letters, no doubt. You do then mean to go there again?"

"I think so. Of course I do not look upon her as being so utterly a castaway as you do."

"I believe her to be a heartless, vile, intriguing woman, who married an old man without caring a straw for him, and who doesn't care how miserable she makes other people. And I think she is very—very ugly. She paints frightfully. Anybody can see it. And as for false hair—why it's nearly all false." Lady George certainly did not paint, and had not a shred of false hair about her. "Oh, George, if you do go, do be firm. You will be firm; will you not?"

"I shall go simply that this annoyance may be at an end."

"Of course you will tell her that I will never speak to her again. How could I? You would not wish it; would you?" In answer to this there was nothing for him to say. He would have wished that a certain amount of half-friendly intercourse should be carried on; but he could not ask her to do this. After a time he might perhaps be able to press on her the advantage of avoiding a scandal, but as yet he could not do even that. He had achieved more

than he had a right to expect in obtaining her permission to call once more in Berkeley Square himself. After that they would soon be going down to Brotherton, and when they were there things might be allowed to settle themselves. Then she asked him another question. "You don't object to my going to Mrs. Jones's party on Thursday?"

The question was very sudden, so that he was almost startled. "It is a dance, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; a dance, of course."

"No; I have no objection."

She had meant to ask him to reconsider his verdict against round dances, but she could hardly do so at that moment. She could not take advantage of her present strength to extract from him a privilege which under other circumstances he had denied to her. Were she to do so it would be as much as to declare that she meant to waltz because he had amused himself with Mrs. Houghton. Her mind was not at all that way given. But she did entertain an idea that something more of freedom should be awarded to her because her husband had given her cause of offence and had been forgiven. While he was still strong with that divine superiority, which she had attributed to him, she had almost acknowledged to herself that he had a right to demand that she should be dull and decorous. But now that she had found him to be in receipt of clandestine love-letters, it did seem that she might allow herself a little liberty. She had forgiven him freely. She had really believed that in spite of the letter she herself was the woman he loved. She had said something to herself about men amusing themselves, and had told herself that, though no woman could have written such a letter as that

without disgracing herself altogether, a man might receive it and even keep it in his pocket without meaning very much harm. But the accident must, she thought, be held to absolve her from some part of the strictness of her obedience. She almost thought that she would waltz at Mrs. Jones's ball—perhaps not with Captain de Baron; perhaps not with much energy or with full enjoyment—but still sufficiently to disenthral herself. If possible she would say a word to her husband first. They were both going to a rather crowded affair at Lady Brabazon's before the night of Mrs. Jones's party. They had agreed that they would do little more than show themselves there. He was obliged to go to this special place and he hated staying. But even at Lady Brabazon's she might find an opportunity of saying what she wished to say.

On that day she took him out in her brougham, and on her return home was alone all the afternoon till about five; and then who should come to her but Captain de Baron. No doubt they two had become very intimate. She could not at all have defined her reasons for liking him. She was quite sure of one thing—she was not in the least in love with him. But he was always gay, always good-humoured, always had plenty to say. He was the source of all the fun that ever came in her way; and fun was very dear to her. He was nice-looking and manly, and gentle withal. Why should she not have her friend? He would not write abominable letters and ask her to say that she loved him! And yet she was aware that there was a danger. She knew that her husband was a little jealous. She knew that Augusta Mildmay was frightfully jealous. That odious creature

Mrs. Houghton had made ever so many nasty little allusions to her and Jack. When his name was announced she almost wished that he had not come; but yet she received him very pleasantly. He immediately began about the Baroness Banmann. The Baroness had on the previous evening made her way on to the platform at the Disabilities when Dr. Fleabody was lecturing, and Lady Selina was presiding, and had, to use Jack's own words, "Kicked up the most delightful bobby that had even been witnessed! She bundled poor old Lady Selina out of the chair."

"Nonsense!"

"So I am told: took the chair by the back and hoisted her out."

"Didn't they send for the police?"

"I suppose they did at last; but the American doctor was too many for her. The Baroness strove to address the meeting; but Olivia Q. Fleabody has become a favourite, and carried the day. I am told that at last the bald-headed old gentleman took the Baroness home in a cab. I'd have given a five-pound note to be there. I think I must go some night and hear the Doctor."

"I wouldn't go again for anything."

"You women are all so jealous of each other. Poor Lady Selina! I'm told she was very much shaken."

"How did you hear it all?"

"From Aunt Ju," said the Captain. "Aunt Ju was there, of course. The Baroness tried to fly into Aunt Ju's arms, but Aunt Ju seems to have retired."

Then the quarrel must have been made up between Captain de Baron and Miss Mildmay. That was the idea which at once came into Mary's head. He could

hardly have seen Aunt Ju without seeing her niece at the same time. Perhaps it was all settled. Perhaps, after all, they would be married. It would be a pity, because she was not half nice enough for him. And then Mary doubted whether Captain de Baron as a married man would be nearly so pleasant as in his present condition. "I hope Miss Mildmay is none the worse," she said.

"A little shaken in her nerves."

"Was—Augusta Mildmay there?"

"Oh, dear, no! It is quite out of her line. She is not at all disposed to lay aside the feeblenesses of her sex and go into one of the learned professions. By-the-bye, I am afraid you and she are not very good friends."

"What makes you say that, Captain de Baron?"

"But are you?"

"I don't know why you should inquire."

"It is natural to wish that one's own friends should be friends."

"Has Miss Mildmay said—anything about—me?"

"Not a word; nor you about her. And therefore I know that something is wrong."

"The last time I saw her I did not think that Miss Mildmay was very happy," said Mary, in a low voice.

"Did she complain to you?" Mary had no answer ready for this question. She could not tell a lie easily, nor could she acknowledge the complaint which the lady had made, and had made so loudly. "I suppose she did complain," he said, "and I suppose I know the nature of her complaint."

"I cannot tell; though, of course, it was nothing to me."

"It is very much to me, though. I wish, Lady George, you could bring yourself to tell me the truth." He paused, but she did not speak. "If it were as I fear, you must know how much I am implicated. I would not for the world that you should think I am behaving badly."

"You should not permit her to think so, Captain de Baron."

"She doesn't think so. She can't think so. I am not going to say a word against her. She and I have been dear friends, and there is no one—hardly anyone—for whom I have a greater regard. But I do protest to you, Lady George, that I have never spoken an untrue word to Augusta Mildmay in my life."

"I have not accused you."

"But has she? Of course it is a kind of thing that a man cannot talk about without great difficulty."

"Is it not a thing that a man should not talk about at all?"

"That is severe, Lady George; much more severe than I should have expected from your usual good nature. Had you told me that nothing had been said to you, there would have been an end of it. But I cannot bear to think that you should have been told that I had behaved badly, and that I should be unable to vindicate myself."

"Have you not been engaged to marry Miss Mildmay?"

"Never."

"Then why did you allow yourself to become so—so much to her?"

"Because I liked her. Because we were thrown

together. Because the chances of things would have it so. Don't you know that that kind of thing is occurring every day? Of course, if a man were made up of wisdom and prudence and virtue and self-denial, this kind of thing wouldn't occur. But I don't think the world would be pleasanter if men were like that. Adelaide Houghton is Miss Mildmay's most intimate friend, and Adelaide has always known that I couldn't marry." As soon as Mrs. Houghton's name was mentioned a dark frown came across Lady George's brow. Captain de Baron saw it, but did not as yet know anything of its true cause.

"Of course I am not going to judge between you," said Lady George, very gravely.

"But I want you to judge me. I want you of all the world to feel that I have not been a liar and a blackguard."

"Captain de Baron! how can you use such language?"

"Because I feel this very acutely. I do believe that Miss Mildmay has accused me to you. I do not wish to say a word against her. I would do anything in the world to protect her from the ill words of others. But I cannot bear that your mind should be poisoned against me. Will you believe me when I tell you that I have never said a word to Miss Mildmay which could possibly be taken as an offer of marriage?"

"I had rather give no opinion."

"Will you ask Adelaide?"

"No; certainly not." This she said with so much vehemence that he was thoroughly startled. "Mrs. Houghton is not among the number of my acquaintances."

"Why not? What is the matter?"

"I can give no explanation, and I had rather that no questions should be asked. But so it is."

"Has she offended Lord George?"

"Oh, dear, no! that is to say I cannot tell you anything more about it. You will never see me in Berkeley Square again. And now, pray say no more about it."

"Poor Adelaide. Well, it does seem terrible that there should be such misunderstandings. She knows nothing about it. I was with her this morning, and she was speaking of you with the greatest affection." Mary struggled hard to appear indifferent to all this, but struggled in vain. She could not restrain herself from displaying her feeling. "May I not ask any further questions?"

"No, Captain de Baron."

"Nor hope that I may be a peacemaker between you?"

"Certainly not. I wish you wouldn't talk about it any more."

"I certainly will not if it offends you. I would not offend you for all the world. When you came up to town, Lady George, a few months ago, there were three or four of us that soon became such excellent friends! And now it seems that everything has gone wrong. I hope we need not quarrel—you and I?"

"I know no reason why we should."

"I have liked you so much. I am sure you have known that. Sometimes one does come across a person that one really likes; but it is so seldom."

"I try to like everybody," she said.

"I don't do that. I fear that at first starting I

try to dislike everybody. I think it is natural to hate people the first time you see them."

"Did you hate me?" she asked, laughing.

"Oh, horribly, for two minutes. Then you laughed, or cried, or sneezed, or did something in a manner that I liked, and I saw at once that you were the most charming human being in the world."

When a young man tells a young woman that she is the most charming human being in the world, he is certainly using peculiar language. In most cases the young man would be supposed to be making love to the young woman. Mary, however, knew very well that Captain de Baron was not making love to her. There seemed to be an understanding that all manner of things should be said between them, and that yet they should mean nothing. But, nevertheless, she felt that the language which this man has used to her would be offensive to her husband if he knew that it had been used when they two were alone together. Had it been said before a roomful of people it would not have mattered. And yet she could not rebuke him. She could not even look displeased. She had believed all that he had said to her about Augusta Mildmay, and was glad to believe it. She liked him so much, that she would have spoken to him as to a brother of the nature of her quarrel with Mrs. Houghton, only that, even to a brother, she would not have mentioned her husband's folly. When he spoke of her crying, or laughing, or sneezing, she liked the little attempt at drollery. She liked to know that he had found her charming. Where is the woman who does not wish to charm, and is not proud to think that she has succeeded with those whom she most likes? She could not rebuke him.

She could not even avoid letting him see that she was pleased. "You have a dozen human beings in the world who are the most delightful," she said, "and another dozen who are the most odious."

"Quite a dozen who are the most odious, but only one, Lady George, who is the most delightful." He had hardly said this when the door opened, and Lord George entered the room. Lord George was not a clever hypocrite. If he disliked a person he soon showed his dislike in his manner. It was very clear to both of them on the present occasion that he did not like the presence of Captain de Baron. He looked very gloomy—almost angry, and after speaking hardly more than a single word to his wife's guest, he stood, silent and awkward, leaning against the mantelpiece.

"What do you think Captain de Baron tells me?" Mary said, trying, but not very successfully, to speak with natural ease.

"I don't in the least know."

"There has been such a scene at the Women's Institute! That Baroness made a dreadful attack on poor Lady Selina Protest."

"She and the American female doctor were talking against each other from the same platform, at the same time," said De Baron.

"Very disgraceful!" said Lord George. "But then the whole thing is disgraceful, and always was. I should think Lord Plausible must be thoroughly ashamed of his sister." Lady Selina was sister to the Earl of Plausible, but, as all the world knew, was not on speaking terms with her brother.

"I suppose that unfortunate German lady will be put in prison," said Lady George.

"I only trust she may never be able to put her foot into your house again."

Then there was a pause. He was apparently so cross that conversation seemed to be impossible. The Captain would have gone away at once had he been able to escape suddenly. But there are times when it is very hard to get out of a room, at which a sudden retreat would imply a conviction that something was wrong. It seemed to him that for her sake he was bound to remain a few minutes longer. "When do you go down to Brothershire?" he asked.

"About the 7th of July," said Mary.

"Or probably earlier," said Lord George; at which his wife looked up at him, but without making any remark.

"I shall be down at my cousin's place some day in August," De Baron said. Lord George frowned more heavily than ever. "Mr. de Baron is going to have a large gathering of people about the end of the month."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mary.

"The Houghtons will be there." Then Mary also frowned. "And I have an idea that your brother, Lord George, has half promised to be one of the party."

"I know nothing at all about it."

"My cousin was up in town yesterday with the Houghtons. Good-bye, Lady George; I shan't be at Lady Brabazon's, because she has forgotten to invite me, but I suppose I shall see you at Mrs. Montacute Jones's?"

"I shall certainly be at Mrs. Montacute Jones's," said Mary, trying to speak cheerfully.

The bell was rung and the door was closed, and then the husband and wife were together. "A dreadful communication has just been made to me," said Lord George in his most solemn and funereal voice—"a most dreadful communication!"

CHAPTER II

A DREADFUL COMMUNICATION

"A most dreadful communication!" There was something in Lord George's voice as he uttered these words which so frightened his wife that she became at the moment quite pale. She was sure, almost sure, from his countenance, that the dreadful communication had some reference to herself. Had any great calamity happened in regard to his own family he would not have looked at her as he was now looking. And yet she could not imagine what might be the nature of the communication. "Has anything happened at Manor Cross?" she asked.

"It is not about Manor Cross."

"Or your brother?"

"It is not about my brother; it does not in any way concern my family. It is about you."

"About me! Oh, George! do not look at me like that. What is it?"

He was very slow in the telling of the story; slow even in beginning to tell it; indeed, he hardly knew how to begin. "You know Miss Augusta Mildmay?" he asked.

Then she understood it all. She might have told him that he could spare himself all further trouble in telling, only that to do so would hardly have suited her purpose; therefore she had to listen to the story, very slowly told. Miss Augusta Mildmay had written to him begging him to come to her. He, very much

astonished at such a request, had nevertheless obeyed it; and Augusta Mildmay had assured him that his wife, by wicked wiles and lures, was interfering between her and her affianced lover, Captain de Baron. Mary sat patiently till she had heard it all—sat almost without speaking a word; but there was a stern look on her face which he had never seen there before. Still he went on with his determined purpose. "These are the kind of things which are being repeated of you," he said at last. "Susanna made the same complaint. And it had reached Brotherton's ears. He spoke to me of it in frightfully strong language. And now this young lady tells me that you are destroying her happiness."

"Well!"

"You can't suppose that I can hear all this without uneasiness."

"Do you believe it?"

"I do not know what to believe. I am driven mad."

"If you believe it, George, if you believe a word of it, I will go away from you. I will go back to papa. I will not stay with you to be doubted."

"That is nonsense."

"It shall not be nonsense. I will not live to hear myself accused by my husband as to another man. Wicked young woman! Oh, what women are and what they can do! She has never been engaged to Captain de Baron."

"What is that to you or me?"

"Nothing, if you had not told me that I stood in her way."

"It is not her engagement, or her hopes, whether ill or well founded, or his treachery to a lady, that concerns you and me, Mary; but that she should

send for me and tell me to my face that you are the cause of her unhappiness. Why should she pitch upon you?"

"How can I say? Because she is very wicked."

"And why should Susanna feel herself obliged to caution me as to this Captain de Baron? She had no motive. She is not wicked."

"I don't know that."

"And why should my brother tell me that all the world is speaking of your conduct with this very man?"

"Because he is your bitterest enemy. George, do you believe it?"

"And why, when I come home with all this heavy on my heart, do I find this very man closeted with you?"

"Closeted with me!"

"You were alone with him."

"Alone with him! Of course I am alone with anyone who calls. Would you like me to tell the servant that Captain de Baron is to be excluded—so that all the world might know that you are jealous?"

"He must be excluded."

"Then you must do it. But it will be unnecessary. As you believe all this, I will tell my father everything and will go back to him. I will not live here, George, to be so suspected that the very servants have to be told that I am not to be allowed to see one special man."

"No; you will go down into the country with me."

"I will not stay in the same house with you," she said, jumping up from her seat, "unless you tell me

that you suspect me of nothing—not even of an impropriety. You may lock me up, but you cannot hinder me from writing to my father.”

“I trust you will do nothing of the kind.”

“Not tell him! Who then is to be my friend, if you turn against me? Am I to be all alone among a set of people who think nothing but ill of me?”

“I am to be your friend.”

“But you think ill of me.”

“I have not said so, Mary.”

“Then say at once that you think no ill, and do not threaten me that I am to be taken into the country for protection. And when you tell me of the bold-faced villainy of that young woman, speak of her with the disgust that she deserves; and say that your sister Susanna is suspicious and given to evil thoughts; and declare your brother to be a wicked slanderer if he has said a word against the honour of your wife. Then I shall know that you think no ill of me; and then I shall know that I may lean upon you as my real friend.”

Her eyes flashed fire as she spoke, and he was silenced for the moment by an impetuosity and a passion which he had not at all expected. He was not quite disposed to yield to her, to assure her of his conviction that those to whom she alluded were all wrong, and that she was all right; but yet he was beginning to wish for peace. That Captain de Baron was a pestilential young man, whose very business it was to bring unhappiness into families, he did believe; and he feared also that his wife had allowed herself to fall into an indiscreet intimacy with this destroyer of women’s characters. Then there was that feeling of Cæsar’s wife strong within his bosom,

which he could, perhaps, have more fully explained to her but for that unfortunate letter from Mrs. Houghton. Any fault, however, of that kind on his part was, in his estimation, nothing to a fault on the part of his wife. She, when once assured that he was indifferent about Mrs. Houghton, would find no cause for unhappiness in the matter. But what would all the world be to him if his wife were talked about commonly in connection with another man? That she should not absolutely be a castaway would not save him from a perpetual agony which he would find to be altogether unendurable. He was, he was sure, quite right as to that theory about Cæsar's wife, even though, from the unfortunate position of circumstances, he could not dilate upon it at the present moment. "I think," he said, after a pause, "that you will allow that you had better drop this gentleman's acquaintance."

"I will allow nothing of the kind, George. I will allow nothing that can imply the slightest stain upon my name or upon your honour. Captain de Baron is my friend. I like him very much. A great many people know how intimate we are. They shall never be taught to suppose that there was anything wrong in that intimacy. They shall never, at any rate, be taught so by anything that I will do. I will admit nothing. I will do nothing myself to show that I am ashamed. Of course you can take me into the country; of course you can lock me up if you like; of course you can tell all your friends that I have misbehaved myself; you can listen to calumny against me from everybody; but if you do I will have one friend to protect me, and I will tell papa everything." Then she walked away to the door as though she were leaving the room.

"Stop a moment," he said. Then she stood with her hand still on the lock, as though intending to stay merely till he should have spoken some last word to her. He was greatly surprised by her strength and resolution, and now hardly knew what more to say to her. He could not beg her pardon for his suspicion; he could not tell her that she was right; and yet he found it impossible to assert that she was wrong. "I do not think that passion will do any good," he said.

"I do not know what will do any good. I know what I feel."

"It will do good if you will allow me to advise you."

"What is your advice?"

"To come down to the country as soon as possible, and to avoid, as far as possible, seeing Captain de Baron before you go."

"That would be running away from Captain de Baron. I am to meet him at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball."

"Send an excuse to Mrs. Montacute Jones."

"You may do so, George, if you like. I will not. If I am told by you that I am not to meet this man, of course I shall obey you; but I shall consider myself to have been insulted—to have been insulted by you." As she said this his brow became very black. "Yes, by you. You ought to defend me from these people who tell stories about me, and not accuse me yourself. I cannot and will not live with you if you think evil of me." Then she opened the door, and slowly left the room. He would have said more had he known what to say. But her words came more fluently than his, and he was dumbfounded by her

volubility; yet he was as much convinced as ever that it was his duty to save her from the ill-repute which would fall upon her from further intimacy with this captain. He could, of course, take her into the country to-morrow, if he chose to do so; but he could not hinder her from writing to the Dean; he could not debar her from pen and ink and the use of the post-office; nor could he very well forbid her to see her father.

Of course if she did complain to the Dean, she would tell the Dean everything. So he told himself. Now, when a man assumes the divine superiority of an all-governing husband, his own hands should be quite clean. Lord George's hands were by no means clean. It was not, perhaps, his own fault that they were dirty. He was able at any rate to tell himself that the fault had not been his. But there was that undoubted love-letter from Mrs. Houghton. If the Dean were to question him about that he could not lie. And though he would assure himself that the fault had all been with the lady, he could not excuse himself by that argument in discussing the matter with the Dean. He was in such trouble that he feared to drive his wife to retaliation; and yet he must do his duty. His honour and her honour must be his first consideration. If she would only promise him not willingly to see Captain de Baron, there should be an end of it, and he would allow her to stay the allotted time in London; but if she would not do this, he thought that he must face the Dean and all his terrors.

But he hardly knew his wife—was hardly aware of the nature of her feelings. When she spoke of appealing to her father, no idea crossed her mind of

complaining of her husband's infidelity. She would seek protection for herself, and would be loud enough in protesting against the slanderous tongues of those who had injured her. She would wage war to the knife against the Marquis, and against Lady Susanna, and against Augusta Mildmay, and would call upon her father to assist her in that warfare; but she would not condescend to allude to a circumstance which, if it were an offence against her, she had pardoned, but as to which, in her heart of hearts, she believed her husband to be, if not innocent, at least not very guilty. She despised Adelaide Houghton too much to think that her husband had really loved such a woman, and was too confident in herself to doubt his love for many minutes. She could hate Adelaide Houghton for making the attempt, and yet could believe that the attempt had been futile.

Nevertheless, when she was alone she thought much of Mrs. Houghton's letter. Throughout her interview with her husband she had thought of it, but had determined from the very first that she would not cast it in his teeth. She would do nothing ungenerous. But was it not singular that he should be able to upbraid her for her conduct, for conduct in which there had been no trespass, knowing as he must have known, feeling as he must have felt, that every word of that letter was dwelling in her memory! He had, at any rate, intended that the abominable correspondence should be clandestine. He must have been sadly weak, to make the least of it, to have admitted such a correspondence. "Pray tell me that you love me!" That had been the language addressed to him only a few days since by a married lady to whom he had once made an offer of marriage; and yet he could now

come and trample on her as though his marital superiority had all the divinity of snow-white purity. This was absolute tyranny. But yet in complaining to her father of his tyranny, she would say nothing of Adelaide Houghton. Of the accusations made against herself, she would certainly tell her father, unless they were withdrawn as far as her own husband could withdraw them. For an hour after leaving him, her passion still sustained her. Was this to be her reward for all her endeavours to become a loving wife?

They were engaged to dine that evening with a certain Mrs. Patmore Green, who had herself been a Germain, and who had been first cousin to the late Marquis. Mary came down dressed into the drawing-room at the proper time, not having spoken another word to her husband, and there she found him also dressed. She had schooled herself to show no sign either of anger or regret, and as she entered the room said some indifferent words about the brougham. He still looked as dark as a thunder-cloud, but he rang the bell and asked the servant a question. The brougham was there, and away they went to Mrs. Patmore Green's. She spoke half-a-dozen words on the way, but he hardly answered her. She knew that he would not do so, being aware that it was not within his power to rise above the feelings of the moment. But she exerted herself so that he might know that she did not mean to display her ill-humour at Mrs. Patmore Green's house.

Lady Brabazon, whose sister had married a Germain, was there, and a Colonel Ansley, who was a nephew of Lady Brotherton's; so that the party was very much a Germain party. All these people had

been a good deal exercised of late on the great Popenjoy question. So immense is the power of possession that the Marquis, on his arrival in town, had been asked to all the Germain houses in spite of his sins, and had been visited with considerable family affection and regard; for was he not the head of them all? But he had not received these offers graciously, and now the current of Germain opinion was running against him. Of the general propriety of Lord George's conduct ever since his birth there had never been a doubt, and the Greens, and Brabazons, and Ansleys were gradually coming round to the opinion that he was right to make inquiries as to the little Popenjoy's antecedents. They had all taken kindly to Mary, though they were, perhaps, beginning to think that she was a little too frivolous, too fond of pleasure for Lord George. Mrs. Patmore Green, who was the wife of a very rich man, and the mother of a very large family, and altogether a very worthy woman, almost at once began to whisper to Mary: "Well, my dear, what news from Italy?"

"I never hear anything about it, Mrs. Green," said Mary, with a laugh.

"And yet the Dean is so eager, Lady George!"

"I won't let papa talk to me about it. Lord Brotherton is quite welcome to his wife, and his son, and everything else for me—only I do wish he would have remained away."

"I think we all wish that, my dear."

Mr. Patmore Green, and Colonel Ansley, and Lady Brabazon all spoke a word or two in the course of the evening to Lord George on the same subject, but he would only shake his head and say nothing. At that time this affair of his wife's was nearer to him

and more burdensome to him than even the Popenjoy question. He could not rid himself of this new trouble even for a moment. He was still thinking of it when all the inquiries about Popenjoy were being made. What did it matter to him how that matter should be settled, if all the happiness of his life were to be dispelled by this terrible domestic affliction? "I am afraid this quarrel with his brother will be too much for Lord George," said Mr. Patmore Green to his wife, when the company were gone. "He was not able to say a word the whole evening."

"And I never knew her to be more pleasant," said Mrs. Patmore Green. "She doesn't seem to care about it the least in the world." The husband and wife did not speak a word to each other as they went home in the brougham. Mary had done her duty by sustaining herself in public, but was not willing to let him think that she had as yet forgiven the cruelty of his suspicions.

CHAPTER III

"I DENY IT"

DURING the whole of that night Lord George lay suffering from his troubles, and his wife lay thinking about them. Though the matter affected her future life almost more materially than his, she had the better courage to maintain her, and a more sustained conviction. It might be that she would have to leave her home and go back to the Deanery, and in that there would be utter ruin to her happiness. Let the result, however, be as it would, she could never own herself to have been one tittle astray, and she was quite sure that her father would support her in that position. The old *ruat caelum* feeling was strong within her. She would do anything she could for her husband short of admitting, by any faintest concession, that she had been wrong in reference to Captain de Baron. She would talk to him, coax him, implore him, reason with him, forgive him, love him, and caress him. She would try to be gentle with him this coming morning. But if he were obdurate in blaming her, she would stand on her own innocence and fight to the last gasp. He was supported by no such spirit of pugnacity. He felt it to be his duty to withdraw his wife from the evil influence of this man's attractions, but felt, at the same time, that he might possibly lack the strength to do so. And then, what is the good of withdrawing a wife, if the wife thinks that

she ought not to be withdrawn? There are sins as to which there is no satisfaction in visiting the results with penalties. The sin is in the mind, or in the heart, and is complete in its enormity, even though there be no result. He was miserable because she had not at once acknowledged that she never ought to see this man again, as soon as she had heard the horrors which her husband had told her. "George," she said to him at breakfast the next morning, "do not let us go on in this way together."

"In what way?"

"Not speaking to each other—condemning each other."

"I have not condemned you, and I don't know why you should condemn me."

"Because I think that you suspect me without a cause."

"I only tell you what people say!"

"If people told me bad things of you, George—that you were this, or that, or the other, should I believe them?"

"A woman's name is everything."

"Then do you protect my name. But I deny it. Her name should be as nothing when compared with her conduct. I don't like to be evil spoken of, but I can bear that, or anything else, if you do not think evil of me—you and papa." This reference to her father brought back the black cloud which her previous words had tended to dispel. "Tell me that you do not suspect me."

"I never said that I suspected you of anything."

"Say that you are sure that, in regard to this man, I never said, or did, or thought anything that was wrong. Come, George, have I not a right to

expect that from you?" She had come round the table and was standing over him, touching his shoulder.

"Even then it would be better that you should go away from him."

"No!"

"I say that it would be better, Mary."

"And I say that it would be worse—much worse. What? Will you bid your wife make so much of any man as to run away from him? Will you let the world say that you think that I cannot be safe in his company? I will not consent to that, George. The running away shall not be mine. Of course you can take me way if you please, but I shall feel——"

"Well!"

"You know what I shall feel. I told you last night."

"What do you want me to do?" he asked, after a pause.

"Nothing."

"I am to hear these stories, and not even to tell you that I have heard them?"

"I did not say that, George. I suppose it is better that you should tell me. But I think you should say at the same time that you know them to be false." Even though they were false, there was that doctrine of Cæsar's wife which she would not understand! "I think I should be told, and then left to regulate my own ways accordingly." This was mutinously imperious, and yet he did not quite know how to convince her of her mutiny. Through it all he was cowed by the remembrance of that love-letter, which, of course, was in her mind, but which she was either too generous or too wise to mention. He almost began

to think that it was wisdom rather than generosity, feeling himself to be more cowed by her reticence than he would have been by her speech.

"You imagine, then, that a husband should never interfere?"

"Not to protect a wife from that from which she is bound to protect herself. If he has to do so, she is not worth the trouble, and he had better get rid of her. It is like preventing a man from drinking by locking up the wine."

"That has to be done sometimes."

"It shan't be done to me, George. You must either trust me, or we must part."

"I do trust you," he said, at last.

"Then let there be an end of all this trouble. Tell Susanna that you trust me. For your brother and that disappointed young woman I care nothing. But if I am to spend my time at Cross Hall, whatever they may think, I should not wish them to believe that you thought evil of me. And, George, don't suppose that, because I say that I will not run away from Captain de Baron, all this will go for nothing with me. I will not avoid Captain de Baron, but I will be careful to give no cause for ill-natured words." Then she put her arm round his neck, and kissed him, and had conquered him.

When he went away from the house he had another great trouble before him. He had not seen Mrs. Houghton as yet since his wife had found that love-letter; but she had written to him often. She had sent notes to his club almost wild with love and anger—with that affectation of love and anger which some women know how to assume, and which so few men know how to withstand. It was not taken to be quite real, even

by Lord George; and yet he could not withstand it. Mrs. Houghton, who understood the world thoroughly, had become quite convinced that Lady George had quarrelled with her. The two women had been very intimate ever since Lady George had been in town, and now for the last few days they had not seen each other. Mrs. Houghton had called twice, and had been refused. Then she had written, and had received no answer. She knew then that Mary had discovered something, and, of course, attributed her lover's absence to the wife's influence. But it did not occur to her that she should, on this account, give up her intercourse with Lord George. Scenes, quarrels, reconciliations, troubles, recriminations, jealousies, resolves, petty triumphs, and the general upsetting of the happiness of other people—these were to her the sweets of what she called a passion. To give it all up because her lover's wife had found her out, and because her lover was in trouble, would be to abandon her love just when it was producing the desired fruit. She wrote short letters and long letters, angry letters and most affectionate letters to Lord George at his club, entreating him to come to her, and almost driving him out of his wits. He had, from the first, determined that he would go to her. He had even received his wife's sanction for doing so; but, knowing how difficult it would be to conduct such an interview, had hitherto put off the evil hour. But now a day and an hour had been fixed, and the day and the hour had come. The hour had very nearly come. When he left his house there was still time for him to sit for awhile at his club, and think what he would say to this woman.

He wished to do what was right. There was not a

man in England less likely to have intended to amuse himself with a second love within twelve months of his marriage than Lord George Germain. He had never been a Lothario—had never thought himself to be gifted in that way. In the first years of his manhood, when he had been shut up at Manor Cross, looking after his mother's limited means, with a full conviction that it was his duty to sacrifice himself to her convenience, he had been apt to tell himself that he was one of those men who have to go through life without marrying—or loving. Though strikingly handsome, he had never known himself to be handsome. He had never thought himself to be clever, or bright, or agreeable. High birth had been given to him, and a sense of honour. Of those gifts he had been well aware and proud enough, but had taken credit to himself for nothing else. Then had come that startling episode of his life in which he had fallen in love with Adelaide de Baron, and then the fact of his marriage with Mary Lovelace. Looking back at it now, he could hardly understand how it had happened that he had either fallen in love or married. He certainly was not now the least in love with Mrs. Houghton. And, though he did love his wife dearly, though the more he saw of her the more he admired her, yet his marriage had not made him happy. He had to live on her money, which galled him, and to be assisted by the Dean's money, which was wormwood to him. And he found himself to be driven whither he did not wish to go, and to be brought into perils from which his experience did not suffice to extricate him. He always repented the step he had taken in regard to his brother, knowing that it was the Dean who had done it, and not he himself. Had

he not married, he might well have left the battle to be fought in after years—when his brother should be dead, and very probably he himself also.

He was aware that he must be very firm with Mrs. Houghton. Come what might he must give her to understand quite clearly that all love-making must be over between them. The horrors of such a condition of things had been made much clearer to him than before by his own anxiety in reference to Captain de Baron. But he knew himself to be too soft-hearted for such firmness. If he could send someone else, how much better it would be! But, alas! this was a piece of work which no deputy could do for him. Nor could a letter serve as a deputy. Let him write as carefully as he might, he must say things which would condemn him utterly were they to find their way into Mr. Houghton's hands. One terrible letter had gone astray, and why not another?

She had told him to be in Berkeley Square at two, and he was there very punctually. He would at the moment have given much to find the house full of people; but she was quite alone. He had thought that she would receive him with a storm of tears, but when he entered she was radiant with smiles. Then he remembered how on a former occasion she had deceived him, making him believe that all her lures to him meant little or nothing just when he had determined to repudiate them because he had feared that they meant so much. He must not allow himself to be won in that way again. He must be firm, even though she smiled. "What is all this about?" she said in an affected whisper as soon as the door was closed. He looked very grave and shook his head. "Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake thy gory

locks at me.' That wife of yours has found out something, and has found it out from you, my lord."

"Yes, indeed."

"What has she found out?"

"She read a letter to me which you sent to the club."

"Then I think it very indecent behaviour on her part. Does she search her husband's correspondence? I don't condescend to do that sort of thing."

"It was my fault. I put it into her hands by mistake. But that does not matter."

"Not matter! It matters very much to me, I think. Not that I care. She cannot hurt me. But, George, was not that careless—very careless; so careless as to be—unkind?"

"Of course it was careless."

"And ought you not to think more of me than that? Have you not done me an injury, sir, when you owed me all solicitude and every possible precaution?" This was not to be denied. If he chose to receive such letters, he was bound at any rate to keep them secret. "But men are so foolish—so little thoughtful! What did she say, George?"

"She behaved like an angel."

"Of course. Wives in such circumstances always do. Just a few drops of anger, and then a deluge of forgiveness. That was it, was it not?"

"Something like it."

"Of course. It happens every day—because men are so stupid, but at the same time so necessary. But what did she say of me? Was she angel on my side of the house as well as yours?"

"Of course she was angry."

"It did not occur to her that she had been the interloper, and had taken you away from me?"

"That was not so. You had married."

"Psha! Married! Of course I had married. Everybody marries. You had married; but I did not suppose that for that reason you would forget me altogether. People must marry as circumstances suit. It is no good going back to that old story. Why did you not come to me sooner, and tell me of this tragedy? Why did you leave me to run after her and write to her?"

"I have been very unhappy."

"So you ought to be. But things are never so bad in the wearing as in the anticipation. I don't suppose she'll go about destroying my name and doing me a mischief?"

"Never."

"Because if she did, you know, I could retaliate."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Houghton?"

"Nothing that need disturb you, Lord George. Do not look such daggers at me. But women have to be forbearing to each other. She is your wife, and you may be sure I shall never say a nasty word about her—unless she makes herself very objectionable to me."

"Nobody can say nasty things about her."

"That is all right, then. And now what have you to say to me about myself? I am not going to be gloomy because a little misfortune has happened. It is not my philosophy to cry after spilt milk."

"I will sit down a minute," he said; for hitherto he had been standing.

"Certainly; and I will sit opposite to you, for ten minutes if you wish it. I see that there is something to be said. What is it?"

"All that has passed between you and me for the last month or two must be forgotten."

"Oh, this is it!"

"I will not make her miserable, nor will I bear a burden upon my own conscience."

"Your conscience! What a speech for a man to make to a woman! And how about my conscience? And then one thing further. You say that it must be all forgotten?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Can you forget it?"

"I can strive to do so. By forgetting, one means laying it aside. We remember chiefly those things which we try to remember."

"And you will not try to remember me in the least? You will lay me aside like an old garment? Because this—angel—has come across a scrawl which you were too careless either to burn or to lock up! You will tell yourself to forget me as you would a servant you had dismissed—much more easily than you would a dog? Is that so?"

"I did not say that I could do it easily."

"You shall not do it at all. I will not be forgotten. Did you ever love me, sir?"

"Certainly I did. You know that I did."

"When? How long since? Have you ever sworn that you loved me since this—angel—has been your wife?" Looking back as well as he could, he rather thought that he never had sworn that he loved her in these latter days. She had often bidden him to do so; but as far as he could recollect at the moment, he had escaped the absolute utterance of the oath by some subterfuge. But doubtless he had done that which had been tantamount to swearing; and, at any

rate, he could not now say that he had never sworn. "Now you come to tell me that it must all be forgotten! Was it she taught you that word?"

"If you upbraid me I will go away."

"Go, sir, if you dare. You first betray me to your wife by your egregious folly, and then tell me that you will leave me because I have a word to say for myself. Oh, George, I expected more tenderness than that from you."

"There is no use in being tender. It can only produce misery and destruction."

"Well, of all the cold-blooded speeches I ever heard that is the worst. After all that has passed between us, you do not scruple to tell me that you cannot even express tenderness for me, lest it should bring you into trouble! Men have felt that before, I do not doubt; but I hardly think any man was ever hard enough to make such a speech. I wonder whether Captain de Baron is so considerate."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You come here and talk to me about your angel, and then tell me that you cannot show me even the slightest tenderness, lest it should make you miserable, and you expect me to hold my tongue."

"I don't know why you should mention Captain de Baron."

"I'll tell you why, Lord George. There are five or six of us playing this little comedy. Mr. Houghton and I are married, but we have not very much to say to each other. It is the same with you and Mary."

"I deny it."

"I daresay; but at the same time you know it to be true. She consoles herself with Captain de Baron.

With whom Mr. Houghton consoles himself I have never taken the trouble to inquire. I hope someone is good-natured to him, poor old soul. Then, as to you and me—you used, I think, to get consolation here. But such comforts cost trouble, and you hate trouble.” As she said this, she wound her arm inside his; and he, angry as he was with her for speaking as she had done of his wife, could not push her from him roughly. “Is not that how it is, George?”

“No.”

“Then I don’t think you understand the play as well as I do.”

“No! I deny it all.”

“All?”

“Everything about Mary. It’s a slander to mention that man’s name in connection with her—a calumny which I will not endure.”

“How is it then, if they mention mine in connection with you?”

“I am saying nothing about that.”

“But I suppose you think of it. I am hardly of less importance to myself than Lady George is to herself. I did think I was not of less importance to you.”

“Nobody ever was or ever can be of so much importance to me as my wife, and I will be on good terms with no one who speaks evil of her.”

“They may say what they like of me?”

“Mr. Houghton must look to that.”

“It is no business of yours, George?”

He paused a moment, and then found the courage to answer her. “No—none,” he said. Had she confined herself to her own assumed wrongs, her own pretended affection—had she contented herself with

quarrelling with him for his carelessness, and had then called upon him for some renewed expression of love—he would hardly have been strong enough to withstand her. But she could not keep her tongue from speaking evil of his wife. From the moment in which he had called Mary an angel, it was necessary to her comfort to malign the angel. She did not quite know the man, or the nature of men generally. A man, if his mind be given that way, may perhaps with safety whisper into a woman's ear that her husband is untrue to her. Such an accusation may serve his purpose. But the woman, on her side, should hold her peace about the man's wife. A man must be very degraded indeed if his wife be not holy to him. Lord George had been driving his wife almost mad during the last twenty-four hours by implied accusations, and yet she was to him the very holy of holies. All the Popenjoy question was as nothing to him in comparison with the sanctity of her name. And now, weak as he was, incapable as he would have been, under any other condition of mind, of extricating himself from the meshes which this woman was spinning for him, he was enabled to make an immediate and most salutary plunge by the genuine anger she had produced. "No, none," he said.

"Oh, very well. The angel is everything to you, and I am nothing?"

"Yes; my wife is everything to me."

"How dared you, then, come here and talk to me of love? Do you think I will stand this—that I will endure to be treated in this way? Angel, indeed! I tell you that she cares more for Jack de Baron's little finger than for your whole body. She is never happy

unless he is with her. I don't think very much of my cousin Jack, but to her he is a god."

"It is false."

"Very well. It is nothing to me; but you can hardly expect, my lord, that I should hear from you such pleasant truths as you have just told me, and not give you back what I believe to be truth in return."

"Have I spoken evil of anyone? But I will not stay here, Mrs. Houghton, to make recriminations. You have spoken most cruelly of a woman who never injured you, who has always been your firm friend. It is my duty to protect her, and I shall always do so in all circumstances. Good-morning." Then he went before she could say another word to him.

He would perhaps have been justified had he been a little proud of the manner in which he had carried himself through this interview; but he entertained no such feeling. To the lady he had just left he feared that he had been rough and almost cruel. She was not to him the mass of whipped cream turned sour which she may perhaps be to the reader. Though he had been stirred to anger, he had been indignant with circumstances rather than with Mrs. Houghton. But in truth the renewed accusation against his wife made him so wretched that there was no room in his breast for pride. He had been told that she liked Jack de Baron's little finger better than his whole body, and had been so told by one who knew both his wife and Jack de Baron. Of course there had been spite and malice and every possible evil passion at work. But then everybody was saying the same thing. Even though there were not a word of truth in it, such a rumour alone would suffice to break his heart. How was he to stop cruel tongues, especially the tongue of

this woman, who would now be his bitterest enemy? If such things were repeated by all connected with him, how would he be able to reconcile his own family to his wife? There was nothing which he valued now but the place of respect which he held in his own family and that which his wife might hold. And in his own mind he could not quite acquit her. She would not be made to understand that she might injure his honour and destroy his happiness even though she committed no great fault. To take her away with a strong hand seemed to be his duty. But then there was the Dean, who would most certainly take her part; and he was afraid of the Dean.

CHAPTER IV

POPENJOY IS POPENJOY

THEN came Lady Brabazon's party. Lord George said nothing further to his wife about Jack de Baron for some days after that storm in Berkeley Square—nor did she to him. She was quite contented that matters should remain as they now were. She had vindicated herself, and, if he made no further accusation, she was willing to be appeased. He was by no means contented—but as a day had been fixed for them to leave London, and that day was now but a month absent, he hardly knew how to insist upon an alteration of their plans. If he did so he must declare war against the Dean, and for a time, against his wife also. He postponed, therefore, any decision, and allowed matters to go on as they were. Mary was no doubt triumphant in her spirit. She had conquered him for a time, and felt that it was so. But she was, on that account, more tender and observant to him than ever. She even offered to give up Lady Brabazon's party altogether. She did not much care for Lady Brabazon's party, and was willing to make a sacrifice that was perhaps no sacrifice. But to this he did not assent. He declared himself to be quite ready for Lady Brabazon's party, and to Lady Brabazon's party they went. As she was on the staircase she asked him a question. "Do you mind my having a waltz to-night?" He could not bring himself for the moment to be stern

enough to refuse. He knew that the pernicious man would not be there. He was quite sure that the question was not asked in reference to the pernicious man. He did not understand, as he should have done, that a claim was being made for general emancipation, and he muttered something which was intended to imply assent. Soon afterwards she took two or three turns with a stout, middle-aged gentleman, a Count somebody, who was connected with the German embassy. Nothing on earth could have been more harmless or apparently uninteresting. Then she signified to him that she had done her duty to Lady Brabazon, and was quite ready to go home. "I'm not particularly bored," he said; "don't mind me." "But I am," she whispered, laughing; "and as I know you don't care about it, you might as well take me away." So he took her home. They were not there above half an hour, but she had carried her point about the waltzing.

On the next day the Dean came to town to attend a meeting at Mr. Battle's chambers, by appointment. Lord George met him there, of course, as they were at any rate supposed to act in strict concert; but on these days the Dean did not stay in Munster Court when in London.

He would always visit his daughter, but would endeavour to do so in her husband's absence, and was unwilling even to dine there. "We shall be better friends down at Brotherton," he said to her. "He is always angry with me after discussing this affair of his brother's; and I am not quite sure that he likes seeing me here." This he had said on a previous occasion, and now the two men met in Lincoln's Inn Fields, not having even gone there together.

At this meeting the lawyer told them a strange story,

and one which to the Dean was most unsatisfactory—one which he resolutely determined to disbelieve. "The Marquis," said Mr. Battle, "had certainly gone through two marriage ceremonies with the Italian lady, one before the death and one after the death of her first reputed husband. And as certainly the so-called Popenjoy had been born before the second ceremony." So much the Dean believed very easily, and the information tallied altogether with his own views. If this was so, the so-called Popenjoy could not be a real Popenjoy, and his daughter would be Marchioness of Brotherton when this wicked ape of a marquis should die; and her son, should she have one, would be the future marquis. But then there came the remainder of the lawyer's story. Mr. Battle was inclined, from all that he had learned, to believe that the Marchioness had never really been married at all to the man whose name she had first borne, and that the second marriage had been celebrated merely to save appearances.

"What appearances!" exclaimed the Dean. Mr. Battle shrugged his shoulders. Lord George sat in gloomy silence. "I don't believe a word of it," said the Dean.

Then the lawyer went on with his story. This lady had been betrothed early in life to the Marchese Luigi; but the man had become insane—partially insane and by fits and starts. For some reason, not as yet understood, which might probably never be understood, the lady's family had thought it expedient that the lady should bear the name of the man to whom she was to be married. She had done so for some years, and had been in possession of some income belonging to him. But Mr. Battle was of

opinion that she had never been Luigi's wife. Further inquiries might possibly be made, and might add to further results. But they would be very expensive. A good deal of money had already been spent. "What did Lord George wish?"

"I think we have done enough," said Lord George slowly—thinking also that he had been already constrained to do much too much.

"It must be followed out to the end," said the Dean. "What! Here is a woman who professed for years to be a man's wife, who bore his name, who was believed by everybody to have been his wife——"

"I did not say that, Mr. Dean," interrupted the lawyer.

"Who lived on the man's revenues as his wife, and even bore his title, and now in such an emergency as this we are to take a cock-and-bull story as gospel. Remember, Mr. Battle, what is at stake."

"Very much is at stake, Mr. Dean, and therefore these inquiries have been made—at a very great expense. But our own evidence, as far as it goes, is all against us. The Luigi family say that there was no marriage. Her family say that there was, but cannot prove it. The child may die, you know."

"Why should he die?" asked Lord George.

"I am trying the matter all round, you know. I am told the poor child is in ill-health. One has got to look at probabilities. Of course you do not abandon a right by not prosecuting it now."

"It would be a cruelty to the boy to let him be brought up as Lord Popenjoy and afterwards dispossessed," said the Dean.

"You, gentlemen, must decide," said the lawyer. "I only say that I do not recommend further steps."

"I will do nothing further," said Lord George. "In the first place I cannot afford it."

"We will manage that between us," said the Dean. "We need not trouble Mr. Battle with that. Mr. Battle will not fear but that all expenses will be paid."

"Not in the least," said Mr. Battle, smiling.

"I do not at all believe the story," said the Dean. "It does not sound like truth. If I spent my last shilling in sifting the matter to the bottom, I would go on with it. Though I were obliged to leave England for twelve months myself, I would do it. A man is bound to ascertain his own rights."

"I will have nothing more to do with it," said Lord George, rising from his chair. "As much has been done as duty required; perhaps more. Mr. Battle, good-morning. If we could know as soon as possible what this unfortunate affair has cost, I shall be obliged." He asked his father-in-law to accompany him, but the Dean said that he would speak a word or two further to Mr. Battle and remained.

At his club Lord George was much surprised to find a note from his brother. The note was as follows:

"Would you mind coming to me here to-morrow or the next day at 3? B.

"Scumberg's Hotel, Tuesday."

This to Lord George was very strange indeed. He could not but remember all the circumstances of his former visit to his brother—how he had been insulted, how his wife had been vilified, how his brother had heaped scorn on him. At first he thought that he was bound to refuse to do as he was asked. But why should his brother ask him? And his brother was his brother—the head of his family. He decided

at last that he would go, and left a note himself at Scumberg's Hotel that evening, saying that he would be there on the morrow.

He was very much perplexed in spirit as he thought of the coming interview. He went to the Dean's club and to the Dean's hotel, hoping to find the Dean, and thinking that as he had consented to act with the Dean against his brother, he was bound in honour to let the Dean know of the new phase in the affair. But he did not find his father-in-law. The Dean returned to Brotherton on the following morning, and therefore knew nothing of this meeting till some days after it had taken place. The language which the Marquis had used to his brother when they were last together had been such as to render any friendly intercourse almost impossible. And then the mingled bitterness, frivolity, and wickedness of his brother, made every tone of the man's voice and every glance of his eye distasteful to Lord George. Lord George was always honest, was generally serious, and never malicious. There could be no greater contrast than that which had been produced between the brothers, either by difference of disposition from their birth, or by the varied circumstances of a residence on an Italian lake and one at Manor Cross. The Marquis thought his brother to be a fool, and did not scruple to say so on all occasions. Lord George felt that his brother was a knave, but would not have so called him on any consideration. The Marquis in sending for his brother hoped that even after all that had passed, he might make use of Lord George. Lord George in going to his brother, hoped that even after all that had passed he might be of use to the Marquis.

When he was shown into the sitting-room at the

hotel, the Marchioness was again there. She, no doubt, had been tutored. She got up at once and shook hands with her brother-in-law, smiling graciously. It must have been a comfort to both of them that they spoke no common language, as they could hardly have had many thoughts to interchange with each other.

"I wonder why the deuce you never learned Italian," said the Marquis.

"We never were taught," said Lord George.

"No; nobody in England ever is taught anything but Latin and Greek—with this singular result, that after ten or a dozen years of learning not one in twenty knows a word of either language. That is our English idea of education. In after life a little French may be picked up, from necessity; but it is French of the very worst kind. My wonder is that Englishmen can hold their own in the world at all."

"They do," said Lord George—to whom all this was ear-piercing blasphemy. The national conviction that an Englishman could thrash three foreigners, and if necessary eat them, was strong with him.

"Yes; there is a ludicrous strength even in their pig-headedness. But I always think that Frenchmen, Italians, and Prussians must, in dealing with us, be filled with infinite disgust. They must ever be saying, 'pig, pig, pig,' beneath their breath at every turn."

"They don't dare to say it out loud," said Lord George.

"They are too courteous, my dear fellow." Then he said a few words to his wife in Italian, upon which she left the room, again shaking hands with her brother-in-law, and again smiling.

Then the Marquis rushed at once into the middle of his affairs. "Don't you think, George, that you are an infernal fool to quarrel with me?"

"You have quarrelled with me. I haven't quarrelled with you.

"Oh, no; not at all! When you send lawyers' clerks all over Italy to try to prove my boy to be a bastard, that is not quarrelling with me! When you accuse my wife of bigamy that is not quarrelling with me! When you conspire to make my house in the country too hot to hold me that is not quarrelling with me!"

"How have I conspired? with whom have I conspired?"

"When I explained my wishes about the house at Cross Hall, why did you encourage those foolish old maids to run counter to me. You must have understood pretty well that it would not suit either of us to be near the other, and yet you chose to stick up for legal rights."

"We thought it better for my mother."

"My mother would have consented to anything that I proposed. Do you think I don't know how the land lies? Well; what have you learned in Italy?" Lord George was silent. "Of course I know. I'm not such a fool as not to keep my ears and eyes open. As far as your inquiries have gone yet, are you justified in calling Popenjoy a bastard?"

"I have never called him so—never! I have always declared my belief and my wishes to be in his favour."

"Then, why the d—— have you made all this rumpus?"

"Because it was necessary to be sure. When a man marries the same wife twice over——"

"Have you never heard of that being done before? Are you so ignorant as not to know that there are a hundred little reasons which may make that expedient? You have made your inquiries now, and what is the result?"

Lord George paused a moment before he replied, and then answered with absolute honesty. "It is all very odd to me. That may be my English prejudice. But I do think that your boy is legitimate."

"You are satisfied as to that?"

He paused again, meditating his reply. He did not wish to be untrue to the Dean, but then he was very anxious to be true to his brother. He remembered that in the Dean's presence he had told the lawyer that he would have nothing to do with further inquiries. He had asked for the lawyer's bill, thereby withdrawing from the investigation. "Yes," he said slowly; "I am satisfied."

"And you mean to do nothing further?"

Again he was very slow, remembering how necessary it would be that he should tell all this to the Dean, and how full of wrath the Dean would be. "No; I do not mean to do anything further."

"I may take that as your settled purpose?"

There was another pause, and then he spoke: "Yes, you may."

"Then, George, let us try and forget what has passed. It cannot pay for you and me to quarrel. I shall not stay in England very long. I don't like it. It was necessary that the people about should know that I had a wife and son, and so I brought him and her to this comfortless country. I shall re-

turn before the winter, and for anything that I care you may all go back to Manor Cross."

"I don't think my mother would like that."

"Why shouldn't she like it? I suppose I was to be allowed to have my own house when I wanted it? I hope there was no offence in that, even to that dragon Sarah? At any rate, you may as well look after the property; and if they don't live there, you can. But there's one question I want to ask you."

"Well?"

"What do you think of your precious father-in-law; and what do you think that I must think of him? Will you not admit that for a vulgar, impudent brute, he is about as bad as even England can supply?" Of course Lord George had nothing to say in answer to this. "He is going on with this tomfoolery, I believe?"

"You mean the inquiry?"

"Yes; I mean the inquiry whether my son and your nephew is a bastard. I know he put you up to it. Am I right in saying that he has not abandoned it?"

"I think you are right."

"Then by heaven I'll ruin him. He may have a little money, but I don't think his purse is quite so long as mine. I'll lead him such a dance that he shall wish he had never heard the name of Germain. "I'll make his Deanery too hot to hold him. Now, George, as between you and me this shall be all passed over. That poor child is not strong, and after all you may probably be my heir. I shall never live in England, and you are welcome to the house. I can be very bitter, but I can forgive; and as far as you are concerned I do forgive. But I expect you to drop your

precious father-in-law." Lord George was again silent. He could not say he would drop the Dean; but at this moment he was not sufficiently fond of the Dean to rise up in his stirrups and fight a battle for him. "You understand me," continued the Marquis; "I don't want any assurance from you. He is determined to prosecute an inquiry adverse to the honour of your family, and in opposition to your settled convictions. I don't think that after that you can doubt about your duty. Come and see me again before long, won't you?" Lord George said that he would come again before long, and then departed.

As he walked home his mind was sorely perplexed and divided. He had made up his mind to take no further share in the Popenjoy investigation, and must have been right to declare as much to his brother. His conscience was clear as to that. And then there were many reasons which induced him to feel coldly about the Dean. His own wife had threatened him with her father. And the Dean was always driving him. And he hated the Dean's money. He felt that the Dean was not quite all that a gentleman should be. But, nevertheless, it behoved him above all things to be honest and straightforward with the Dean.

There had been something in his interview with his brother to please him, but it had not been all delightful.

CHAPTER V

PREPARATIONS FOR THE BALL

How was he to keep faith with the Dean? This was Lord George's first trouble after his reconciliation with his brother. The Dean was back at the Deanery, and Lord George mistrusted his own power of writing such a letter as would be satisfactory on so obtuse a matter. He knew that he should fail in making a good story, even face-to-face, and that his letter would be worse than spoken words. In intellect he was much inferior to the Dean, and was only too conscious of his own inferiority. In this condition of mind he told his story to his wife. She had never even seen the Marquis, and had never quite believed in those ogre qualities which had caused so many groans to Lady Sarah and Lady Susanna. When, therefore, her husband told her that he had made his peace with his brother, she was inclined to rejoice. "And Popenjoy is Popenjoy," she said, smiling.

"I believe he is, with all my heart."

"And that is to be an end of it, George? You know that I have never been eager for any grandeur."

"I know it. You have behaved beautifully all along."

"Oh, I won't boast. Perhaps I ought to have been more ambitious for you. But I hate quarrels, and I shouldn't like to have claimed anything which did not really belong to us. It is all over now."

"I can't answer for your father."

"But you and papa are all one."

"Your father is very steadfast. He does not know yet that I have seen my brother. I think you might write to him. He ought to know what has taken place. Perhaps he would come up again if he heard that I had been with my brother."

"Shall I ask him to come here?"

"Certainly. Why should he not come here? There is his room. He can always come if he pleases."

So the matter was left, and Mary wrote her letter. It was not very lucid—but it could hardly have been lucid, the writer knowing so few of the details. "George has become friends with his brother," she said, "and wishes me to tell you. He says that Popenjoy is Popenjoy, and I am very glad. It was such a trouble. George thinks you will come up to town when you hear, and begs you will come here. Do come, papa! It makes me quite wretched when you go to that horrid hotel. There is such a lot of quarrelling, and it almost seems as if you were going to quarrel with us when you don't come here. Pray, papa, never, do that. If I thought you and George weren't friends it would break my heart. Your room is always ready for you, and if you'll say what day you'll be here I will get a few people to meet you." The letter was much more occupied with her desire to see her father than with that momentous question on which her father was so zealously intent. Popenjoy is Popenjoy! It was very easy to assert so much. Lord George would no doubt give way readily, because he disliked the trouble of the contest. But it was not so with the Dean. "He is no more Popenjoy than I am Popenjoy," said the Dean to himself when he read the letter. Yes; he must go up to town again. He must

know what had really taken place between the two brothers. That was essential, and he did not doubt but that he should get the exact truth from Lord George. But he would not go to Munster Court. There was already a difference of opinion between him and his son-in-law sufficient to make such a sojourn disagreeable. If not disagreeable to himself he knew that it would be so to Lord George. He was sorry to vex Mary, but Mary's interests were more at his heart than her happiness. It was now the business of his life to make her a Marchioness, and that business he would follow whether he made himself, her, and others happy or unhappy. He wrote to her, bidding her tell her husband that he would again be in London on a day which he named, but adding that for the present he would prefer going to the hotel. "I cannot help it," said Lord George, moodily. "I have done all I could to make him welcome here. If he chooses to stand off and be stiff, he must do so."

At this time Lord George had many things to vex him. Every day he received at his club a letter from Mrs. Houghton, and each letter was a little dagger. He was abused by every epithet, every innuendo, and every accusation familiar to the tongues and pens of the irritated female mind. A stranger reading them would have imagined that he had used all the arts of a Lothario to entrap the unguarded affections of the writer, and then, when, successful, had first neglected the lady and afterwards betrayed her. And with every stab so given there was a command expressed that he should come instantly to Berkeley Square in order that he might receive other and worse gashes at the better convenience of the assailant. But as Mrs. Bond's ducks would certainly not have come

out of the pond had they fully understood the nature of that lady's invitation, so neither did Lord George go to Berkeley Square in obedience to these commands. Then there came a letter which to him was no longer a little dagger, but a great sword—a sword making a wound so wide that his life-blood seemed to flow. There was no accusation of betrayal in this letter. It was simply the broken-hearted wailings of a woman whose love was too strong for her. Had he not taught her to regard him as the only man in the world whose presence was worth having? Had he not so wound himself into every recess of her heart as to make life without seeing him insupportable? Could it be possible that, after having done all this, he had no regard for her? Was he so hard, so cruel, such adamant as to deny her at least a farewell? As for herself, she was now beyond all fear of consequences. She was ready to die if it were necessary—ready to lose all the luxuries of her husband's position rather than never see him again. She had a heart! She was inclined to doubt whether any one among her acquaintances was so burdened. Why, oh why, had she thought so steadfastly of his material interests when he used to kneel at her feet and ask her to be his bride, before he had ever seen Mary Lovelace? Then this long epistle was brought to an end. "Come to me to-morrow, A. H. Destroy this the moment you have read it." The last behest he did obey. He would put no second letter from this woman in his wife's way. He tore the paper into minute fragments, and deposited the portions in different places. That was easily done; but what should be done as to the other behest? If he went to Berkeley Square again, would he be able to leave it triumphantly as he had done on his last visit?

That he did not wish to see her for his own sake he was quite certain. But he thought it incumbent on him to go yet once again. He did not altogether believe all that story as to her tortured heart. Looking back at what had passed between them since he had first thought himself to be in love with her, he could not remember such a depth of love-making on his part as that which she described. In the ordinary way he had proposed to her, and had, in the ordinary way, been rejected. Since that, and since his marriage, surely the protestations of affection had come almost exclusively from the lady! He thought that it was so, and yet was hardly sure. If he had got such a hold on her affections as she described, certainly then he owed to her some reparation. But as he remembered her great head of false hair and her paint, and called to mind his wife's description of her, he almost protested to himself that she was deceiving him—he almost read her rightly. Nevertheless, he would go once more. He would go and tell her sternly that the thing must come to an end, and that no more letters were to be written.

He did go, and found Jack de Baron there, and heard Jack discourse enthusiastically about Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball, which was to be celebrated in two or three days from the present time. Then Mrs. Houghton was very careful to ask some question in Lord George's presence as to some special figure-dance which was being got up for the occasion. It was a dance newly introduced from Moldavia, and was the most ravishing thing in the way of dancing that had ever yet found its way into this country. Nobody had yet seen it, and it was being kept a profound secret—to be displayed only at Mrs. Monta-

cute Jones's party. It was practised in secret in her back drawing-room by the eight performers, with the assistance of a couple of most trustworthy hired musicians, whom that liberal old lady, Mrs. Montacute Jones, supplied—so that the rehearsals might make the performers perfect for the grand night. This was the story as told with great interest by Mrs. Houghton, who seemed for the occasion almost to have recovered from her heart complaint. That, however, was necessarily kept in abeyance during Jack's presence. Jack, though he had been enthusiastic about Mrs. Jones and her ball before Lord George's arrival, and though he had continued to talk freely up to a certain point, suddenly became reticent as to the great Moldavian dance. But Mrs. Houghton would not be reticent. She declared the four couples who had been selected as performers to be the happy fortunate ones of the season. Mrs. Montacute Jones was a nasty old woman for not having asked her. Of course there was a difficulty, but there might have been two sets. "And Jack is such a false loon," she said to Lord George, "that he won't show me one of the figures."

"Are you going to dance it?" asked Lord George.

"I fancy I'm to be one of the team."

"He is to dance with Mary," said Mrs. Houghton. Then Lord George thought that he understood the young man's reticence, and he was once again very wretched. There came that cloud upon his brow which never sat there without being visible to all who were in the company. No man told the tale of his own feelings so plainly as he did. And Mrs. Houghton, though declaring herself to be ignorant of the figure, had described the dance as a farrago of polkas,

waltzes, and galops, so that the thing might be supposed to be a fast rapturous whirl from the beginning to the end. And his wife was going through this indecent exhibition at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball with Captain de Baron after all that he had said!

"You are quite wrong in your ideas about the dance," said Jack to his cousin. "It is the quietest thing out—almost as grave as a minuet. It's very pretty, but people here will find it too slow." It may be doubted whether he did much good by this explanation. Lord George thought that he was lying, though he had almost thought before that Mrs. Houghton was lying on the other side. But it was true at any rate that, after all that had passed, a special arrangement had been made for his wife to dance with Jack de Baron. And then his wife had been called by implication, "One of the team."

Jack got up to go, but before he left the room Aunt Ju was there, and then that sinful old woman Mrs. Montacute Jones herself. "My dear," she said, in answer to a question from Mrs. Houghton about the dance, "I am not going to tell anybody anything about it. I don't know why it should have been talked of. Four couple of good-looking young people are going to amuse themselves, and I have no doubt that those who look on will be very much gratified." Oh, that his wife, that Lady Mary Germain, should be talked of as one of "four couple of good-looking young people," and that she should be about to dance with Jack de Baron, in order that strangers might be gratified by looking at her!

It was manifest that nothing special could be said to Mrs. Houghton on that occasion, as one person came after another. She looked all the while per-

fectly disembarassed. Nobody could have imagined that she was in the presence of the man whose love was all the world to her. When he got up to take his leave, she parted from him as though he were no more to her than he ought to have been. And indeed he, too, had for the time been freed from the flurry of his affair with Mrs. Houghton, by the other flurry occasioned by the Moldavian dance. The new dance was called, he had been told, the Kappa-kappa. There was something in the name suggestive of another dance of which he had heard—and he was very unhappy.

He found the Dean in Munster Court when he reached his own house. The first word that his wife spoke to him was about the ball. "George, papa is going with me on Friday to Mrs. Montacute Jones's."

"I hope he will like it," said Lord George.

"I wish you would come."

"Why should I go? I have already said that I would not."

"As for the invitation, that does not signify in the least. Do come just about twelve o'clock. We've got up such a dance, and I should like you to come and see it."

"Who is we?"

"Well—the parties are not quite arranged yet. I think I'm to dance with Count Costi. Something depends on colours of dress and other matters. The gentlemen are all to be in some kind of uniform. We have rehearsed it, and in rehearsing we have done it all round, one with the other."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"We weren't to tell till it was settled."

"I mean to go and see it," said the Dean. "I delight in anything of that kind."

Mary was so perfectly easy in the matter, so free from doubt, so disembarassed, that he was for the moment tranquillised. She had said that she was to dance, not with that pernicious Captain, but with a foreign count. He did not like foreign counts, but at the present moment he preferred anyone to Jack de Baron. He did not for a moment doubt her truth. And she had been true—though Jack de Baron and Mrs. Houghton had been true also. When Mary had been last at Mrs. Jones's house the matter had not been quite settled, and in her absence Jack had foolishly, if not wrongly, carried his point with the old lady. It had been decided that the performers were to go through their work in the fashion that might best achieve the desired effect—that they were not to dance exactly with whom they pleased, but were to have their parts assigned them as actors on a stage. Jack, no doubt, had been led by his own private wishes in securing Mary as his partner, but of that contrivance on his part she had been ignorant when she gave her programme of the affair to her husband. "Won't you come in and see it?" she said again.

"I am not very fond of those things. Perhaps I may come in for a few minutes."

"I am fond of them," said the Dean. "I think any innocent thing that makes life joyous and pretty is good."

"That is rather begging the question," said Lord George, as he left the room.

Mary had not known what her husband meant by begging the question, but the Dean had of course

understood him. "I hope he is not going to become ascetic," he said. "I hope at least that he will not insist that you should be so."

"It is not his nature to be very gay," she answered.

On the next day, in the morning, was the last rehearsal, and then Mary learned what was her destiny. She regretted it, but could not remonstrate. Jack's uniform was red. The Count's dress was blue and gold. Her dress was white, and she was told that the white and red must go together. There was nothing more to be said. She could not plead that her husband was afraid of Jack de Baron. Nor certainly would she admit to herself that she was in the least afraid of him herself. But for her husband's foolish jealousy, she would infinitely have preferred the arrangement as now made—just as a little girl prefers as a playmate a handsome boy whom she has long known, to some ill-visaged stranger with whom she has never quarrelled and never again made friends. But when she saw her husband, she found herself unable to tell him of the change which had been made. She was not actor enough to be able to mention Jack de Baron's name to him with tranquillity.

On the next morning—the morning of the important day—she heard casually from Mrs. Jones that Lord George had been at Mrs. Houghton's house. She had quite understood from her husband that he intended to see that evil woman again after the discovery and reading of the letter. He had himself told her that he intended it; and she, if she had not actually assented, had made no protest against his doing so. But that visit, represented as being one

final necessary visit, had, she was well aware, been made some time since. She had not asked him what had taken place. She had been unwilling to show any doubt by such a question. The evil woman's name had never been on her tongue since the day on which the letter had been read. But now, when she heard that he was there again, so soon, as a friend joining in general conversation in the evil woman's house, the matter did touch her. Could it be that he was deceiving her after all, and that he loved the woman? Did he really like that helmet, that paint, and that affected laugh? And had he lied to her—deceived her with a premeditated story which must have been full of lies? She could hardly bring herself to believe this; and yet, why, why, why should he be there? The visit of which he had spoken had been one intended to put an end to all close friendship—one in which he was to tell the woman that though the scandal of an outward quarrel might be avoided, he and she were to meet no more. And yet he was there. For aught she knew, he might be there every day! She did know that Mrs. Montacute Jones had found him there. Then he could come home to her and talk of the impropriety of dancing! He could do such things as this, and yet be angry with her because she liked the society of Captain de Baron!

Certainly she would dance with Captain de Baron. Let him come and see her dancing with him; and then, if he dared to upbraid her, she would ask him why he continued his intimacy in Berkeley Square. In her anger she almost began to think that a quarrel was necessary. Was it not manifest that he was deceiving her about that woman? The more she thought

of it the more wretched she became; but on that day she said nothing of it to him. They dined together, the Dean dining with them. He was perturbed and gloomy, the Dean having assured them that he did not mean to allow the Popenjoy question to rest. "I stand in no awe of your brother," the Dean had said to him. This had angered Lord George, and he had refused to discuss the matter any further.

At nine Lady George went up to dress, and at half-past ten she started with her father. At that time her husband had left the house and had said not a word further as to his intention of going to Mrs. Jones's house. "Do you think he will come?" she said to the Dean.

"Upon my word I don't know. He seems to me to be in an ill-humour with all the world."

"Don't quarrel with him, papa."

"I do not mean to do so. I never mean to quarrel with anyone, and least of all with him. But I must do what I conceive to be my duty, whether he likes it or not."

CHAPTER VI

THE KAPPA-KAPPA

MRS. MONTACUTE JONES's house in Grosvenor Place was very large and very gorgeous. On this occasion it was very gorgeous indeed. The party had grown in dimensions. The new Moldavian dance had become the topic of general discourse. Everybody wanted to see the Kappa-kappa. Count Costi, Lord Giblet, young Sir Harry Tripletoe, and, no doubt, Jack de Baron also, had talked a good deal about it at the clubs. It had been intended to be a secret, and the ladies, probably, had been more reticent. Lady Florence Fitzflorencia had just mentioned it to her nineteen specially intimate friends. Madame Gigi, the young wife of the old Bohemian minister, had spoken of it only to the diplomatic set; Miss Patmore Green had been as silent as death, except in her own rather large family, and Lady George had hardly told anybody, except her father. But, nevertheless, the secret had escaped, and great efforts had been made to secure invitations. "I can get you to the Duchess of Albury's in July if you can manage it for me," one young lady said to Jack de Baron.

"Utterly impossible!" said Jack, to whom the offered bribe was not especially attractive. "There won't be standing room in the cellars. I went down on my knees to Mrs. Montacute Jones for a very old friend, and she simply asked me whether I was mad." This was, of course, romance; but, nevertheless, the

crowd was great, and the anxiety to see the Kappa-kappa universal.

By eleven the dancing had commenced. Everything had been arranged in the strictest manner. Whatever dance might be going on was to be brought to a summary close at twelve o'clock, and then the Kappa-kappa was to be commenced. It had been found that the dance occupied exactly forty minutes. When it was over the doors of the banqueting hall would be opened. The Kappa-kappaites would then march in to supper, and the world at large would follow them.

Lady George, when she first entered the room, found a seat near the hostess, and sat herself down, meaning to wait for the important moment. She was a little flurried as she thought of various things. There was the evil woman before her, already dancing. The evil woman had nodded at her, and had then quickly turned away, determined not to see that her greeting was rejected; and there was Augusta Mildmay absolutely dancing with Jack de Baron, and looking as though she enjoyed the fun. But to Mary there was something terrible in it all. She had been so desirous to be happy—to be gay—to amuse herself, and yet to be innocent. Her father's somewhat epicurean doctrines had filled her mind completely. And what had hitherto come of it? Her husband mistrusted her; and she at this moment certainly mistrusted him most grievously. Could she fail to mistrust him? And she, absolutely conscious of purity, had been so grievously suspected! As she looked round on the dresses and diamonds, and heard the thick hum of voices, and saw on all sides the pretence of cordiality—as she watched the altogether

unhidden flirtations of one girl, and the despondent frown of another—she began to ask herself whether her father had not been wrong when he insisted that she should be taken to London. Would she not have been more safe and therefore more happy even down at Cross Hall, with her two virtuous sisters-in-law? What would become of her should she quarrel with her husband, and how should she not quarrel with him if he would suspect her, and would frequent the house of that evil woman?

Then Jack de Baron came up to her, talking to her father. The Dean liked the young man, who had always something to say for himself, whose manners were lively, and who, to tell the truth, was more than ordinarily civil to Lady George's father. Whether Jack would have put himself out of the way to describe the Kappa-kappa to any other dignitary of the Church may be doubted, but he had explained it all very graciously to the Dean. "So it seems that, after all, you are to dance with Captain de Baron," said the Dean.

"Yes; isn't it hard upon me? I was to have stood up with a real French Count, who has real diamond buttons, and now I am to be put off with a mere British Captain, because my white frock is supposed to suit his red coat!"

"And who has the Count?"

"That odiously fortunate Lady Florence—and she has diamonds of her own! I think they should have divided the diamonds. Madame Gigi has the Lord. Between ourselves, papa," and as she said this she whispered, and both her father and Jack bent over to hear her—"we are afraid of our Lord; ain't we, Captain de Baron? There has been ever so much to

manage, as we none of us quite wanted the Lord. Madame Gigi talks very little English, so we were able to put him off upon her."

"And does the Lord talk French?"

"That doesn't signify, as Giblest never talks at all," said Jack.

"Why did you have him?"

"To tell you the truth, among us all there is rather a hope that he will propose to Miss Patmore Green. Dear Mrs. Montacute Jones is very clever at these things, and saw at a glance that nothing would be so likely to make him do it as seeing Madeline Green dancing with Triplettoe. No fellow ever did dance so well as Triplettoe, or looked half so languishing. You see, Dean, there are a good many ins and outs in these matters, and they have to be approached carefully." The Dean was amused, and his daughter would have been happy, but for the double care which sat heavy at her heart. Then Jack suggested to her that she might as well stand up for a square dance. All the other Kappa-kappaits had danced or were dancing. The one thing on which she was firmly determined was that she would not be afraid of Captain de Baron. Whatever she did now she did immediately under her father's eye. She made no reply, but got up and put her hand on the Captain's arm without spoken assent, as a woman will do when she is intimate with a man.

"Upon my word, for a very young creature, I never saw such impudence as that woman's," said a certain Miss Punter to Augusta Mildmay. Miss Punter was a great friend of Augusta Mildmay, and was watching her friend's broken heart with intense interest.

"It is disgusting," said Augusta.

"She doesn't seem to mind the least who sees it. She must mean to leave Lord George altogether, or she would never go on like that. De Baron wouldn't be such a fool as to go off with her?"

"Men are fools enough for anything," said the broken-hearted one. While this was going on Mary danced her square dance complaisantly; and her proud father, looking on, thought that she was by far the prettiest woman in the room.

Before the quadrille was over a gong was struck, and the music stopped suddenly. It was twelve o'clock, and the Kappa-kappa was to be danced. It is hard in most amusements to compel men and women into disagreeable punctuality; but the stopping of music will bring a dance to a sudden end. There were some who grumbled, and one or two declared that they would not even stay to look at the Kappa-kappa. But Mrs. Montacute Jones was a great autocrat; and in five minutes' time the four couples were arranged, with ample space, in spite of the pressing crowd.

It must be acknowledged that Jack de Baron had given no correct idea of the dance when he said that it was like a minuet; but it must be remembered also that Lady George had not been a party to that deceit. The figure was certainly a lively figure. There was much waltzing to quick time, the glory of which seemed to consist in going backwards, and in the interweaving of the couples without striking each other, as is done in skating. They were all very perfect, except poor Lord Giblet, who once or twice nearly fell into trouble.

During the performance they all changed part-

ners more than once, but each lady came back to her own after very short intervals. All those who were not envious declared it to be very pretty, and prophesied great future success for the Kappa-kappa. Those who were very wise and very discreet hinted that it might become a romp when danced without all the preparation which had been given to it on the present occasion. It certainly became faster as it progressed, and it was evident that considerable skill and considerable physical power were necessary for its completion. "It would be a deal too stagey for my girls," said Mrs. Conway Smith, whose "girls" had, during the last ten years, gone through every phase of flirtation invented in these latter times. Perhaps it did savour a little too much of ballet practice; perhaps it was true that with less care there might have been inconveniences. Faster it grew and faster; but still they had all done it before, and done it with absolute accuracy. It was now near the end. Each lady had waltzed a turn with each gentleman. Lady George had been passed on from the Count to Sir Harry, and from Sir Harry to Lord Giblest. After her turn it was his Lordship's duty to deliver her up to her partner, with whom she would make a final turn round the dancing-space; and then the Kappa-kappa would have been danced. But, alas! as Lord Giblest was doing this he lost his head and came against the Count and Madame Gigi. Lady George was almost thrown to the ground, but was caught by the Captain, who had just parted with Lady Florence to Sir Harry. But poor Mary had been almost on the floor, and could hardly have been saved without something approaching to the violence of an embrace.

Lord George had come into the room very shortly

after the Kappa-kappa had been commenced, but had not at once been able to get near the dancers. Gradually he worked his way through the throng, and when he first saw the performers could not tell who was his wife's partner. She was then waltzing backwards with Count Costi; and he, though he hated waltzing, and considered the sin to be greatly aggravated by the backward movement, and though he hated counts, was still somewhat pacified. He had heard since he was in the room how the partners were arranged, and had thought that his wife had deceived him. The first glance was reassuring. But Mary soon returned to her real partner; and he slowly ascertained that she was in very truth waltzing with Captain de Baron. He stood there, a little behind the first row of spectators, never for a moment seen by his wife, but able himself to see everything, with a brow becoming every moment blacker and blacker. To him the exhibition was in every respect objectionable. The brightness of the apparel of the dancers was in itself offensive to him. The approach that had been made to the garishness of a theatrical performance made the whole thing, in his eyes, unfit for modest society. But that his wife should be one of the performers, that she should be gazed at by a crowd as she tripped about, and that, after all that had been said, she should be tripping in the arms of Captain de Baron, was almost more than he could endure. Close to him, but a little behind, stood the Dean, thoroughly enjoying all that he saw. It was to him a delight that there should be such a dance to be seen in a lady's drawing-room, and that he should be there to see it. It was to him an additional delight that his daughter should have been selected as one of the dancers. These

people were all persons of rank and fashion, and his girl was among them quite as their equal—his girl who some day should be Marchioness of Brotherton. And it gratified him thoroughly to think that she enjoyed it—that she did it well—that she could dance so that standers-by took pleasure in seeing her dancing. His mind in the matter was altogether antagonistic to that of his son-in-law.

Then came the little accident. The Dean, with a momentary impulse, put up his hand, and then smiled, well-pleased when he saw how well the matter had been rectified by the Captain's activity. But it was not so with Lord George. He pressed forward into the circle with so determined a movement that nothing could arrest him till he had his wife by the arm. Everybody, of course, was staring at him. The dancers were astounded. Mary apparently thought less of it than the others, for she spoke to him with a smile. "It is all right, George; I was not in the least hurt."

"It is disgraceful!" said he in a loud voice; "come away."

"Oh, yes," she said; "I think we had finished. It was nobody's fault."

"Come away; I will have no more of this."

"Is there anything wrong?" asked the Dean, with an air of innocent surprise.

The offended husband was almost beside himself with passion. Though he knew that he was surrounded by those who would mock him he could not restrain himself. Though he was conscious at the moment that it was his special duty to shield his wife, he could not restrain his feelings. The outrage was too much for him. "There is very much the mat-

ter," he said aloud; "let her come away with me." Then he took her under his arm and attempted to lead her away to the door.

Mrs. Montacute Jones had, of course, seen it all, and was soon with him. "Pray do not take her away, Lord George," she said.

"Madam, I must be allowed to do so," he replied, still pressing on. "I would prefer to do so."

"Wait till her carriage is here."

"We will wait below. Good-night, good-night." And so he went out of the room with his wife on his arm, followed by the Dean. Since she had perceived that he was angry with her, and that he had displayed his anger in public, Mary had not spoken a word. She had pressed him to come and see the dance, not without a purpose in her mind. She meant to get rid of the thralldom to which he had subjected her when desiring her not to waltz, and had done so in part when she obtained his direct sanction at Lady Brabazon's. No doubt she had felt that as he took liberties as to his own life, as he received love-letters from an odious woman, he was less entitled to unqualified obedience than he might have been had his hands been perfectly clean. There had been a little spirit of rebellion engendered in her by his misconduct; but she had determined to do nothing in secret. She had asked his leave to waltz at Lady Brabazon's, and had herself persuaded him to come to Mrs. Montacute Jones's. Perhaps she would hardly have dared to do so had she known that Captain de Baron was to be her partner. While dancing she had been unaware of her husband's presence, and had not thought of him. When he had first come to her she had in truth imagined that he had been fright-

ened by her narrow escape from falling. But, when he bade her come away with that frown on his face, and with that awful voice, then she knew it all. She had no alternative but to take his arm, and to "come away." She had not courage enough—I had better perhaps say impudence enough—to pretend to speak to him or anyone near him with ease. All eyes were upon her, and she felt them; all tongues would be talking of her, and she already heard the ill-natured words. Her own husband had brought all this upon her—her own husband, whose love-letter from another woman she had so lately seen, and so readily forgiven! It was her own husband who had so cruelly, so causelessly, subjected her to shame in public, which could never be washed out or forgotten! And who would sympathise with her? There was no one now but her father. He would stand by her; he would be good to her; but her husband by his own doing had wilfully disgraced her.

Not a word was spoken till they were in the cloak-room, and then Lord George stalked out to find the brougham, or any cab that might take them away from the house. Then for the first time the Dean whispered a word to her. "Say as little as you can to him to-night, but keep up your courage."

"Oh, papa!"

"I understand it all. I will be with you immediately after breakfast."

"You will not leave me here alone?"

"Certainly not, nor till you are in your carriage. But listen to what I am telling you. Say as little as you can till I am with you. Tell him that you are unwell to-night, and that you must sleep before you talk to him."

"Ah! you don't know, papa."

"I know that I will have the thing put on a right footing." Then Lord George came back, having found a cab. He gave his arm to his wife and took her away, without saying a word to the Dean. At the door of the cab the Dean bade them both good-night. "God bless you, my child," he said.

"Good-night; you'll come to-morrow?"

"Certainly." Then the door was shut, and the husband and wife were driven away.

Of course this little episode contributed much to the amusement of Mrs. Montacute Jones's guests. The Kappa-kappa had been a very pretty exhibition, but it had not been nearly so exciting as that of the jealous husband. Captain de Baron, who remained, was, of course, a hero. As he could not take his partner in to supper, he was honoured by the hand of Mrs. Montacute Jones herself. "I wouldn't have had that happen for a thousand pounds," said the old lady.

"Nor I for ten," said Jack.

"Has there been any reason for it?"

"None in the least. I can't explain of what nature is my intimacy with Lady George, but it has been more like that of children than grown people."

"I know. When grown people play at being children, it is apt to be dangerous."

"But we had no idea of the kind. I may be wicked enough. I say nothing about that. But she is as pure as snow. Mrs. Jones, I could no more dare to press her hand than I would to fly at the sun. Of course I like her."

"And she likes you."

"I hope so—in that sort of way. But it is shock-

ing that such a scene should come from such a cause."

"Some men, Captain de Baron, don't like having their young wives liked by handsome young officers. It's very absurd, I grant."

Mrs. Jones and Captain de Baron did really grieve at what had been done, but to others, the tragedy coming after the comedy had not been painful. "What will be the end of it?" said Miss Patmore Green to Sir Harry.

"I am afraid they won't let her dance it any more," said Sir Harry, who was intent solely on the glories of the Kappa-kappa. "We shall hardly get anyone to do it so well."

"There'll be something worse than that, I'm afraid," said Miss Green.

Count Costi suggested to Lady Florence that there would certainly be a duel. "We never fight here in England, Count."

"Ah! dat is bad. A gentleman come and make himself vera disagreeable. If he most fight perhaps he would hold his tong. I tink we do things better in Paris and Vienna." Lord Giblet volunteered his opinion to Madame Gigi that it was very disgraceful. Madame Gigi simply shrugged her shoulders, and opened her eyes. She could congratulate herself on being able to manage her own husband better than that.

CHAPTER VII

REBELLION

LADY GEORGE never forgot that slow journey home in the cab, for in truth it was very slow. It seemed to her that she would never reach her own house. "Mary," he said, as soon as they were seated, "you have made me a miserable man." The cab rumbled and growled frightfully, and he felt himself unable to attack her with dignity while they were progressing. "But I will postpone what I have to say till we have reached home."

"I have done nothing wrong," said Mary, very stoutly.

"You had better say nothing more till we are at home." After that not a word more was said, but the journey was very long.

At the door of the house Lord George gave his hand to help her out of the cab, and then marched before her through the passage into the dining-room. It was evident that he was determined to make his harangue on that night. But she was the first to speak. "George," she said, "I have suffered very much, and am very tired. If you please, I will go to bed."

"You have disgraced me," he said.

"No; it is you that have disgraced me and put me to shame before everybody—for nothing, for nothing. I have done nothing of which I am ashamed." She looked up into his face and he could

see that she was full of passion, and by no means in a mood to submit to his reproaches. She, too, could frown, and was frowning now. Her nostrils were dilated and her eyes were bright with anger. He could see how it was with her; and though he was determined to be master, he hardly knew how he was to make good his masterdom.

"You had better listen to me," he said.

"Not to-night. I am too ill, too thoroughly wretched. Anything you have got to say of course I will listen to—but not now." Then she walked to the door.

"Mary!" She paused with her hand on the lock. "I trust that you do not wish to contest the authority which I have over you?"

"I do not know; I cannot say. If your authority calls upon me to own that I have done anything wrong, I shall certainly contest it. And if I have not, I think—I think you will express your sorrow for the injury you have done me to-night." Then she left the room before he had made up his mind how he would continue his address. He was quite sure that he was right. Had he not desired her not to waltz? At that moment he quite forgot the casual permission he had barely given at Lady Brabazon's, and which had been intended to apply to that night only. Had he not specially warned her against this Captain de Baron, and told her that his name and hers were suffering from her intimacy with the man? And then, had she not deceived him directly by naming another person as her partner in that odious dance? The very fact that she had so deceived him was proof to him that she had known that she ought not to dance with Captain de Baron, and that she had a vicious pleasure in doing

so, which she had been determined to gratify even in opposition to his express orders. As he stalked up and down the room in his wrath, he forgot as much as he remembered. It had been represented to him that this odious romp had been no more than a minuet; but he did not bear in mind that his wife had been no party to that misrepresentation. And he forgot, too, that he himself had been present as a spectator at her express request. And when his wrath was at the fullest he almost forgot those letters from Adelaide Houghton! But he did not forget that all Mrs. Montacute Jones's world had seen him as, in his offended marital majesty, he took his wife out from amidst the crowd, declaring his indignation and his jealousy to all who were there assembled. He might have been wrong there. As he thought of it all he confessed to himself as much as that. But the injury done had been done to himself rather than to her. Of course they must leave London now, and leave it forever. She must go with him whither he might choose to take her. Perhaps Manor Cross might serve for their lives' seclusion, as the Marquis would not live there. But Manor Cross was near the Deanery, and he must sever his wife from her father. He was now very hostile to the Dean, who had looked on and seen his abasement, and had smiled. But, through it all, there never came to him for a moment any idea of a permanent quarrel with his wife. It might, he thought, be long before there was permanent comfort between them. Obedience, absolute obedience, must come before that could be reached. But of the bond which bound them together he was far too sensible to dream of separation. Nor, in his heart, did he think her guilty of anything but foolish, headstrong indis-

cretion—of that, and latterly of dissimulation. It was not that Cæsar had been wronged, but that his wife had enabled idle tongues to suggest a wrong to Cæsar.

He did not see her again that night, betaking himself at a very late hour to his own dressing-room. On the next morning at an early hour he was awake thinking. He must not allow her to suppose for a moment that he was afraid of her. He went into her room a few minutes before their usual breakfast hour, and found her, nearly dressed, with her maid. "I shall be down directly, George," she said in her usual voice. As he could not bid the woman go away, he descended and waited for her in the parlour. When she entered the room she instantly rang the bell and contrived to keep the man in the room while she was making the tea. But he would not sit down. How is a man to scold his wife properly with toast and butter on a plate before him? "Will you not have your tea?" she asked—oh, so gently.

"Put it down," he said. According to her custom, she got up and brought it round to his place. When they were alone she would kiss his forehead as she did so; but now the servant was just closing the door, and there was no kiss.

"Do come to your breakfast, George," she said.

"I cannot eat my breakfast while all this is on my mind. I must speak of it. We must leave London at once."

"In a week or two."

"At once. After last night, there must be no more going to parties." She lifted her cup to her lips and sat quite silent. She would hear a little more before she answered him. "You must feel yourself that for

some time to come, perhaps for some years, privacy will be the best for us."

"I feel nothing of the kind, George."

"Could you go and face those people after what happened last night?"

"Certainly I could, and should think it my duty to do so to-night, if it were possible. No doubt you have made it difficult, but I would do it."

"I was forced to make it difficult. There was nothing for me to do but to take you away."

"Because you were angry, you were satisfied to disgrace me before all the people there. What has been done cannot be helped. I must bear it. I cannot stop people from talking and thinking evil. But I will never say that I think evil of myself by hiding myself. I don't know what you mean by privacy. I want no privacy."

"Why did you dance with that man?"

"Because it was so arranged."

"You had told me it was someone else?"

"Do you mean to accuse me of a falsehood, George? First one arrangement had been made, and then another."

"I had been told before how it was to be."

"Who told you? I can only answer for myself."

"And why did you waltz?"

"Because you had withdrawn your foolish objection. Why should I not dance like other people? Papa does not think it wrong?"

"Your father has nothing to do with it."

"If you ill-treat me, George, papa must have something to do with it. Do you think he will see me disgraced before a room full of people, as you did yesterday, and hold his tongue! Of course you are

my husband, but he is still my father; and if I want protection, he will protect me."

"I will protect you," said Lord George, stamping his foot upon the floor.

"Yes; by burying me somewhere. That is what you say you mean to do. And why? Because you get some silly nonsense into your head, and then make yourself and me ridiculous in public. If you think I am what you seem to suspect, you had better let papa have me back again—though that is so horrible that I can hardly bring myself to think of it. If you do not think so, surely you would beg my pardon for the affront you put on me last night."

This was a way in which he had certainly not looked at the matter. Beg her pardon! He, as a husband, beg a wife's pardon under any circumstances! And beg her pardon for having carried her away from a house in which she had manifestly disobeyed him. No, indeed. But then he was quite as strongly opposed to that other idea of sending her back to her father, as a man might send a wife who had disgraced herself. Anything would be better than that. If she would only acknowledge that she had been indiscreet, they would go down together into Brothershire, and all might be comfortable. Though she was angry with him, obstinate and rebellious, yet his heart was softened to her, because she did not throw the woman's love-letter in his teeth. He had felt that here would be his great difficulty, but his difficulty now arose rather from the generosity which kept her silent on the subject. "What I did," he said, "I did to protect you."

"Such protection was an insult." Then she left the room before he had tasted his tea or his toast. She had heard her father's knock, and knew that she

would find him in the drawing-room. She had made up her mind how she would tell the story to him; but when she was with him he would have no story told at all. He declared that he knew everything, and spoke as though there could be no doubt as to the heinousness, or rather, absurdity, of Lord George's conduct. "It is very sad—very sad, indeed," he said; "one hardly knows what one ought to do."

"He wants to go down—to Cross Hall."

"That is out of the question. You must stay out your time here and then come to me, as you arranged. He must get out of it by saying that he was frightened by thinking that you had fallen."

"It was not that, papa."

"Of course it was not; but how else is he to escape from his own folly?"

"You do not think that I have been—wrong—with Captain de Baron?"

"I! God bless you, my child. I think that you have been wrong! He cannot think so either. Has he accused you?"

Then she told him, as nearly as she could, all that had passed between them, including the expression of his desire that she should not waltz, and his subsequent permission given at Lady Brabazon's. "Pish!" he ejaculated. "I hate these attempted restrictions. It is like a woman telling her husband not to smoke. What a fool a man must be not to see that he is preparing misery for himself, by laying embargoes on the recreations of his nearest companion!" Then he spoke of what he himself would do. "I must see him, and if he will not hear reason, you must go with me to the Deanery without him."

"Don't separate us, papa."

"God forbid that there should be any permanent separation. If he be obstinate, it may be well that you should be away from him for a week or two. Why can't a man wash his dirty linen at home, if he has any to wash. His, at any rate, did not come to him with you."

Then there was a very stormy scene in the dining-room between the two men. The Dean, whose words were infinitely more ready and available than those of his opponent, said very much the most, and by the fierce indignation of his disclaimers, almost prevented the husband from dwelling on the wife's indiscretion. "I did not think it possible that such a man as you could have behaved so cruelly to such a girl."

"I was not cruel; I acted for the best."

"You degraded yourself, and her too."

"I degraded no one," said Lord George.

"It is hard to think what may now best be done to cure the wound which she has been made to suffer. I must insist on this—that she must not be taken from town before the day fixed for her departure."

"I think of going to-morrow," said Lord George, gloomily.

"Then you must go alone, and I must remain with her."

"Certainly not—certainly not."

"She will not go. She shall not be made to run away. Though everything has to be told in the public prints, I will not submit to that. I suppose you do not dare to tell me that you suspect her of any evil?"

"She has been indiscreet."

"Suppose I granted that—which I don't—is she to be ground into dust in this way for indiscretion?"

Have not you been indiscreet?" Lord George made no direct answer to this question, fearing that the Dean had heard the story of the love-letter; but of that matter the Dean had heard nothing. "In all your dealings with her, can you tax yourself with no deviation from wisdom?"

"What a man does is different. No conduct of mine can blemish her name."

"But may destroy her happiness—and if you go on in this way it will do so."

During the whole of that day the matter was discussed. Lord George obstinately insisted on taking his wife down to Cross Hall, if not on the next day, then on the day after. But the Dean, and with the Dean the young wife, positively refused to accede to this arrangement. The Dean had his things brought from the inn to the house in Munster Court; and though he did not absolutely declare that he had come there for his daughter's protection, it was clear that this was intended. In such an emergency Lord George knew not what to do. Though the quarrel was already very bitter, he could not quite tell his father-in-law to leave the house; and then there was always present to his mind a feeling that the Dean had a right to be there in accordance with the pecuniary arrangement made. The Dean would have been welcome to the use of the house and all that was in it, if only Mary would have consented to be taken at once down to Cross Hall. But being under her father's wing, she would not consent. She pleaded that by going at once—or running away, as she called it—she would own that she had done something wrong, and she was earnest in declaring that nothing should wring such a confession from her. Everybody, she

said, knew that she was to stay in London to the end of June. Everybody knew that she was then to go to the Deanery. It was not to be borne that people should say that her plans had been altered because she had danced the Kappa-kappa with Captain de Baron. She must see her friends before she went or else her friends would know that she had been carried into banishment. In answer to this, Lord George declared that he, as husband, was paramount. This Mary did not deny, but, paramount as the authority was, she would not, in this instance, be governed by it.

It was a miserable day to them all. Many callers came, asking after Lady George, presuming that her speedy departure from the ball had been caused by her accident. No one was admitted, and all were told that she had not been much hurt. There were two or three stormy scenes between the Dean and his son-in-law, in one of which Lord George asked the Dean whether he conceived it to be compatible with his duty as a clergyman of the Church of England to induce a wife to disobey her husband. In answer to this, the Dean said that in such a matter the duty of a Church dignitary was the same as that of any other gentleman, and that he as a gentleman, and also as a dignitary, meant to stand by his daughter. She refused to pack up, or to have her things packed. When he came to look into himself, he found that he had not power to bid the servant do it in opposition to their mistress. That the power of a husband was paramount he was well aware, but he did not exactly see his way to the exercise of it. At last he decided that he, at any rate, would go down to Cross Hall. If the Dean chose to create a separation between his

daughter and her husband, he must bear the responsibility.

On the following day he did go down to Cross Hall, leaving his wife and her father in Munster Court without any definite plans.

CHAPTER VIII

AS TO BLUEBEARD

WHEN Lord George left his own house alone he was very wretched, and his wife, whom he left behind him, was as wretched as himself. Of course the matter had not decided itself in this way without very much absolute quarrelling between them. Lord George had insisted, had stamped his foot, and had even talked of force. Mary, prompted by her father, had protested that she would not run away from the evil tongues of people who would be much more bitter in her absence than they would dare to be if she remained among them. He, when he found that his threat of forcible abduction was altogether vain, had to make up his mind whether he also would remain. But both the Dean and his wife had begged that he would do so, and he would not even seem to act in obedience to them. So he went, groaning much in spirit, puzzled to think what story he should tell to his mother and sisters, terribly anxious as to the future, and in spirit repentant for the rashness of his conduct at the ball. Before he was twenty miles out of London he was thinking with infinite regret of his love for his wife, already realising the misery of living without her, almost stirred to get out at the next station and return by the first train to Munster Court. In this hour of his sorrow there came upon him a feeling of great hatred for Mrs. Houghton. He almost believed

that she had for her own vile purposes excited Captain de Baron to make love to his wife. And then, in regard to that woman, his wife had behaved so well! Surely something was due to so much generosity. And then, when she had been angry with him, she had been more beautiful than ever. What a change had those few months in London made in her! She had lost her childish little timidities, and had bloomed forth a beautiful woman. He had no doubt as to her increased loveliness, and had been proud to think that all had acknowledged it. But as to the childish timidity, perhaps he would have preferred that it should not have been so quickly or so entirely banished. Even at Brotherton he hankered to return to London; but, had he done so, the Brotherton world would have known it. He put himself into a carriage instead, and had himself driven through the park to Cross Hall.

All this occurred on the day but one subsequent to the ball, and he had by the previous post informed Lady Sarah that he was coming. But in that letter he had said that he would bring his wife with him, and on his immediate arrival had to answer questions as to her unexpected absence. "Her father was very unwilling that she should come," he said.

"But I thought he was at the hotel," said Lady Sarah.

"He is in Munster Court, now. To tell the truth I am not best pleased that it should be so; but at the last moment I did not like to contradict her. I hate London and everything in it. She likes it, and as there was a kind of bargain made I could not well depart from it."

"And you have left her alone with her father in

London!" said Lady Susanna, with a tone of pretended dismay.

"How can she be alone if her father is with her," answered Lord George, who did not stand in awe of Lady Susanna as he did of Lady Sarah. Nothing further at the moment was said, but all the sisters felt that there was something wrong.

"I don't think it at all right that Mary should be left with the Dean," said the old lady to her second daughter. But the old lady was specially prejudiced again the Dean as being her eldest son's great enemy. Before the day was over Lord George wrote a long letter to his wife—full of affection indeed, but still more full of covert reproaches. He did not absolutely scold her; but he told her that there could be no happiness between a wife and a husband unless the wife would obey, and he implored her to come to him with as little delay as possible. If she would only come, all should be right between them.

Mary, when her husband was really gone, was much frightened at her own firmness. That doctrine of obedience to her husband had been accepted by her in full. When disposed to run counter to the ladies at Manor Cross, she always had declared to herself that they bore no authority delegated from "George," and that she would obey "George," and no one but George. She had told him more than once, half-playfully, that if he wanted anything done he must tell her himself. And this, though he understood it to contain rebellion against the Germaines generally, had a pleasant flavour with him as acknowledging so completely his own power. She had said to her father, and unfortunately to Mrs. Houghton when Mrs. Houghton was her friend, that she was not going to do what all the Ger-

main women told her; but she had always spoken of her husband's wishes as absolutely imperative. Now she was in open mutiny against her husband, and, as she thought of it, it seemed to her to be almost impossible that peace should be restored between them.

"I think I will go down very soon," she said to her father, after she had received her husband's letter.

"What do you call very soon?"

"In a day or two."

"Do not do anything of the kind. Stay here till the appointed time comes. It is only a fortnight now. I have made arrangements at Brotherton, so that I can be with you till then. After that come down to me. Of course your husband will come over to you at the Deanery."

"But if he shouldn't come?"

"Then he would be behaving very wickedly. But, of course, he will come. He is not a man to be obstinate in that fashion."

"I do not know that, papa."

"But I do. You had better take my advice in this matter. Of course I do not want to foster a quarrel between you and your husband."

"Pray—pray don't let there be a quarrel."

"Of course not. But the other night he lost his head, and treated you badly. You and I are quite willing to forgive and forget all that. Any man may do a foolish thing, and men are to be judged by general results rather than single acts."

"He is very kind to me—generally."

"Just so; and I am not angry with him in the least. But after what occurred it would be wrong that you should go away at once. You felt it yourself at the moment."

"But anything would be better than quarrelling, papa."

"Almost anything would be better than a lasting quarrel with your husband; but the best way to avoid that is to show him that you know how to be firm in such an emergency as this." She was, of course, compelled by her father's presence and her father's strength to remain in town, but she did so longing every hour to pack up and be off to Cross Hall. She had very often doubted whether she could love her husband as a husband ought to be loved, but now, in her present trouble, she felt sure of her own heart. She had never been really on bad terms with him before since their marriage, and the very fact of their separation increased her tenderness to him in a wonderful degree. She answered his letter with language full of love and promises of submission, loaded with little phrases of feminine worship, merely adding that papa thought she had better stay in town till the end of the month. There was not a word of reproach in it. She did not allude to his harsh conduct at the ball, nor did she write the name of Mrs. Houghton.

Her father was very urgent with her to see all her friends, to keep any engagements previously made, to be seen at the play, and to let all the world know by her conduct that she was not oppressed by what had taken place. There was some intention of having the Kappa-kappa danced again, and as far as possible by the same people. Lord Giblet was to retire in favour of some more expert performer, but the others were supposed to be all worthy of an encore. But of course there arose a question as to Lady George. There could be no doubt that Lord George had disapproved very strongly of the Kappa-kappa. The matter got

to the Dean's ears, and the Dean counselled his daughter to join the party yet again. "What would he say, papa?" The Dean was of opinion that in such case Lord George would say and do much less than he had said and done before. According to his views, Lord George must be taught that his wife had her privileges as well as he his. This fresh difficulty dissolved itself because the second performance was fixed for a day after that on which it had been long known that Lady George was to leave London; and even the Dean did not propose that she should remain in town after that date with a direct view to the Kappa-kappa.

She was astonished at the zeal with which he insisted that she should go out into the gay world. He almost ridiculed her when she spoke of economy in her dress, and seemed to think that it was her duty to be a woman of fashion. He still spoke to her from time to time of the Popenjoy question, always asserting his conviction that, whatever the Marquis might think, even if he were himself deceived through ignorance of the law, the child would be at last held to be illegitimate. "They tell me, too," he said, "that his life is not worth a year's purchase."

"Poor little boy!"

"Of course, if he had been born as the son of the Marquis of Brotherton ought to be born, nobody would wish him anything but good."

"I don't wish him anything but good," said Mary.

"But as it is," continued the Dean, apparently not observing his daughter's remark, "everybody must feel that it would be better for the family that he should be out of the way. Nobody can think that such a child can live to do honour to the British peerage."

"He might be well brought up."

"He wouldn't be well brought up. He has an Italian mother and Italian belongings, and everything around him as bad as it can be. But the question at last is one of right. He was clearly born when his mother was reputed to be the wife, not of his father, but of another man. That cock-and-bull story which we have heard may be true. It is possible. But I could not rest in my bed if I did not persevere in ascertaining the truth." The Dean did persevere, and was very constant in his visits to Mr. Battle's office. At this time Miss Tallowax came up to town, and she also stayed for a day or two in Munster Court. What passed between the Dean and his aunt on the subject Mary, of course, did not hear; but she soon found that Miss Tallowax was as eager as her father, and she learned that Miss Tallowax had declared that the inquiry should not languish from want of funds. Miss Tallowax was quite alive to the glory of the Brotherton connection.

As the month drew to an end Mary, of course, called on all her London friends. Her father was always eager to know whom she saw, and whether any allusion was made by any of them to the scene at the ball. But there was one person, who had been a friend, on whom she did not call, and this omission was observed by the Dean. "Don't you ever see Mrs. Houghton now?" he asked.

"No, papa," said Mary, with prompt decision.

"Why not?"

"I don't like her."

"Why don't you like her? You used to be friends. Have you quarrelled?"

"Yes; I have quarrelled with her."

"What did she do?" Mary was silent. "Is it a secret?"

"Yes, papa; it is a secret. I would rather you would not ask. But she is a nasty vile creature, and I will never speak to her again."

"That is strong language, Mary."

"It is. And now that I have said that, pray don't talk about her any more."

The Dean was discreet, and did not talk about Mrs. Houghton any more; but he set his mind to work to guess, and guessed something near the truth. Of course he knew that his son-in-law had professed at one time to love this lady when she had been Miss de Baron, and he had been able to see that subsequently to that they had been intimate friends. "I don't think, my dear," he said, laughing, "that you can be jealous of her attractions."

"I am not in the least jealous of her, papa. I don't know anyone that I think so ugly. She is a nasty made-up thing. But pray don't talk about her any more." Then the Dean almost knew, that Mary had discovered something, and was too noble to tell a story against her husband.

The day but one before she was to leave town Mrs. Montacute Jones came to her. She had seen her kind old friend once or twice since the catastrophe at the ball, but always in the presence of other persons. Now they were alone together. "Well, my dear," said Mrs. Jones, "I hope you have enjoyed your short season. We have all been very fond of you."

"You have been very kind to me, Mrs. Jones."

"I do my best to make young people pleasant, my

dear. You ought to have liked it all, for I don't know anybody who has been so much admired. His Royal Highness said the other night that you were the handsomest woman in London."

"His Royal Highness is an old fool," said Mary, laughing.

"He is generally thought to be a very good judge in that matter. You are going to keep the house, are you not?"

"Oh yes; I think there is a lease."

"I am glad of that. It is a nice little house, and I should be sorry to think that you are not coming back."

"We are always to live here half the year, I believe," said Mary. "That was agreed when we married, and that's why I go away now."

"Lord George, I suppose, likes the country best?"

"I think he does. I don't, Mrs. Jones."

"They are both very well in their way, my dear. I am a wicked old woman, who like to have everything gay. I never go out of town till everything is over, and I never come up till everything begins. We have a nice place down in Scotland, and you must come and see me there some autumn. And then we go to Rome. It's a pleasant way of living, though we have to move about so much."

"It must cost a great deal of money?"

"Well, yes. One can't drive four-in-hand so cheap as a pair. Mr. Jones has a large income." This was the first direct intimation Mary had ever received that there was a Mr. Jones. "But we weren't always rich. When I was your age I hadn't nearly so nice a house as you. Indeed, I hadn't a house at all, for I wasn't married, and was thinking whether I would take or

reject a young barrister of the name of Smith, who had nothing a year to support me on. You see I never got among the aristocratic names, as you have done."

"I don't care a bit about that."

"But I do. I like Germains, and Talbots, and Howards, and so does everybody else, only so many people tell lies about it. I like having lords in my drawing-room. They look handsomer and talk better than other men. That's my experience. And you are pretty nearly sure with them that you won't find you have got somebody quite wrong."

"I know a lord," said Mary, "who isn't very right. That is, I don't know him, for I never saw him."

"You mean your wicked brother-in-law. I should like to know him of all things. He'd be quite an attraction. I suppose he knows how to behave like a gentleman?"

"I'm not so sure of that. He was very rough to papa."

"Ah—yes. I think we can understand that, my dear. Your father hasn't made himself exactly pleasant to the Marquis. Not that I say he's wrong. I think it was a pity, because everybody says that the little Lord Popenjoy will die. You were talking of me and my glories, but long before you are my age you will be much more glorious. You will make a charming marchioness."

"I never think about it, Mrs. Jones; and I wish papa didn't. Why shouldn't the little boy live? I could be quite happy enough as I am if people would only be good to me and let me alone."

"Have I distressed you?" asked the old woman.

"Oh, dear no; not you."

"You mean what happened at my house the other night?"

"I didn't mean anything particular, Mrs. Jones. But I do think that people sometimes are very ill-natured."

"I think, you know, that was Lord George's doing. He shouldn't have taken you off so suddenly. It wasn't your fault that the stupid man tripped. I suppose he doesn't like Captain de Baron."

"Don't talk about it, Mrs. Jones."

"Only that I know the world so well that what I say might, perhaps, be of use. Of course I know that he has gone out of town."

"Yes, he has gone."

"I was so glad that you didn't go with him. People will talk, you know, and it did look as though he were a sort of Bluebeard. Bluebeards, my dear, must be put down. There may be most well-intentioned Bluebeards, who have no chambers of horrors, no secrets"—Mary thought of the letter from Mrs. Houghton, of which nobody knew but herself—"who never cut off anybody's heads, but still interfere dreadfully with the comfort of a household. Lord George is very nearly all that a man ought to be."

"He is the best man in the world," said Mary.

"I am sure you think so. But he shouldn't be jealous, and above all he shouldn't show that he's jealous. You were bound, I think, to stay behind and show the world that you had nothing to fear. I suppose the Dean counselled it?"

"Yes; he did."

"Fathers of married daughters shouldn't often interfere, but there I think he was right. It is much better for Lord George himself that it should be so."

There is nothing so damaging to a young woman as to have it supposed she has had to be withdrawn from the influence of a young man."

"It would be wicked of anybody to think so," said Mary, sobbing.

"But they must have thought so if you hadn't remained. You may be sure, my dear, that your father was quite right. I am sorry that you cannot make one in the dance again, because we shall have changed Lord Gibley for Lord Augustus Grandison, and I am sure it will be done very well. But of course I couldn't ask you to stay for it. As your departure was fixed beforehand you ought not to stay for it. But that is very different from being taken away in a jiffy, like some young man who is spending more than he ought to spend, and is hurried off suddenly nobody knows where."

Mary, when Mrs. Jones had left the house, found that upon the whole she was thankful to her friend for what had been said. It pained her to hear her husband described as a jealous Bluebeard; but the fact of his jealousy had been so apparent, that in any conversation on the matter intended to be useful so much had to be acknowledged. She, however, had taken the strong course of trusting to her father rather than to her husband, and she was glad to find that her conduct and her father's conduct were approved by so competent a judge as Mrs. Montacute Jones. And throughout the whole interview there had been an air of kindness which Mary had well understood. The old lady had intended to be useful, and her intentions were accepted.

On the next morning, soon after breakfast, the Dean received a note which puzzled him much, and

for an hour or two left him in doubt as to what he would do respecting it—whether he would comply with, or refuse to comply with, the request made in it. At first he said nothing of the letter to his daughter. He had, as she was aware, intended to go to Lincoln's Inn early in the day, but he sat thinking over something, instead of leaving the house, till at last he went to Mary and put the letter into her hands. "That," said he, "is one of the most unexpected communications I ever had in my life, and one which it is most difficult to answer. Just read it." The letter, which was very short, was as follows:

"The Marquis of Brotherton presents his compliments to the Dean of Brotherton, and begs to say that he thinks that that some good might now be done by a personal interview. Perhaps the Dean will not object to call on the Marquis here at some hour after two o'clock to-morrow.

"Scumberg's Hotel, Albemarle Street.

"*29th June, 187—*"

"But we go to-morrow," said Mary.

"Ah! he means to-day. The note was written last night. I have been thinking about it, and I think I shall go."

"Have you written to him?"

"There is no need. A man who sends to me a summons to come to him so immediately as that has no right to expect an answer. He does not mean anything honest."

"Then why do you go?"

"I don't choose to appear to be afraid to meet him. Everything that I do is done above board. I rather

imagine that he doesn't expect me to come; but I will not let him have to say that he had asked me and that I had refused. I shall go."

"Oh, papa, what will he say to you?"

"I don't think he can eat me, my dear; nor will he dare even to murder me. I daresay he would if he could."

And so it was decided; and at the hour appointed the Dean sallied forth to keep the appointment.

CHAPTER IX

SCUMBERG'S

THE Dean, as he walked across the Park towards Albemarle Street, had many misgivings. He did not at all believe that the Marquis entertained friendly relations in regard to him, or even such neutral relations as would admit of the ordinary courtesies of civilised life. He made up his mind that he would be insulted—unless, indeed, he should be so cowed as to give way to the Marquis. But that he himself thought to be impossible. The more he reflected about it, the more assured he became that the Marquis had not expected him to obey the summons. It was possible that something might be gained on the other side by his refusal to see the elder brother of his son-in-law. He might, by refusing, leave it open to his enemies to say that he had rejected an overture to peace, and he now regarded as his enemies almost the entire German family. His own son-in-law would in future, he thought, be as much opposed to him as the head of the family. The old Marchioness, he knew, sincerely believed in Popenjoy. And the daughters, though they had at first been very strong in their aversion to the foreign mother and the foreign boy, were now averse to him also, on other grounds. Of course Lord George would complain of his wife at Cross Hall. Of course the story of the Kappa-kappa would be told in a manner that would horrify those three ladies. The husband would of course be indignant at his wife's dis-

obedience in not having left London when ordered by him to do so. He had promised not to foster a quarrel between Mary and Lord George, but he thought it by no means improbable that circumstances would for a time render it expedient that his daughter should live at the Deanery, while Lord George remained at Cross Hall. As to nothing was he more fully resolved than this, that he would not allow the slightest blame to be attributed to his daughter, without repudiating and resenting the imputation. Any word against her conduct, should such word reach his ears even through herself, he would resent, and it would go hard with him, but he would exceed such accusations by recriminations. He would let them know that, if they intended to fight, he also could fight. He had never uttered a word as to his own liberality in regard to money, but he had thought of it much. Theirs was the rank, and the rank was a great thing in his eyes; but his was at present the wealth; and wealth, he thought, was as powerful as rank. He was determined that his daughter should be a marchioness, and in pursuit of that object he was willing to spend his money; but he intended to let those among whom he spent it know that he was not to be set on one side, as a mere parson out of the country, who happened to have a good income of his own.

It was in this spirit—a spirit of absolute pugnacity—that he asked for the Marquis at Scumberg's Hotel. Yes; the Marquis was at home, and the servant would see if his master could be seen. "I fancy that I have an appointment with him," said the Dean, as he gave his card. "I am rather hurried, and if he can't see me perhaps you'll let me know at once." The man soon returned, and with much condescension told

the Dean that his lordship would see him. "That is kind, as his lordship told me to come," said the Dean to himself, but still loud enough for the servant to hear him. "His lordship will be with you in a few minutes," said the man, as he shut the door of the sitting-room.

"I shall be gone if he's not here in a very few minutes," said the Dean, unable to restrain himself.

And he very nearly did go before the Marquis came to him. He had already walked to the rug with the object of ringing the bell, and had then decided on giving the lord two minutes more, resolving also that he would speak his mind to the lord about this delay, should the lord make his appearance before the two minutes were over. The time had just expired when his lordship did make his appearance. He came shuffling into the room after a servant, who walked before him with the pretence of carrying books and a box of papers. It had all been arranged, the Marquis knowing that he would secure the first word by having his own servant in the room. "I am very much obliged to you for coming, Mr. Dean," he said. "Pray sit down. I should have been here to receive you if you had sent me a line."

"I only got your note this morning," said the Dean, angrily.

"I thought that perhaps you might have sent a message. It doesn't signify in the least. I never go out till after this, but had you named a time I should have been here to receive you. That will do, John; shut the door. Very cold, don't you think it?"

"I have walked, my lord, and am warm."

"I never walk, never could walk. I don't know why it is, but my legs won't walk."

"Perhaps you never tried."

"Yes, I have. They wanted me to walk in Switzerland twenty years ago, but I broke down after the first mile. George used to walk like the very d——. You see more of him now than I do. Does he go on walking?"

"He is an active man."

"Just that. He ought to have been a country letter-carrier. He would have been as punctual as the sun, and has quite all the necessary intellect."

"You sent for me, Lord Brotherton——"

"Yes; yes. I had something that I thought I might as well say to you, though, upon my word, I almost forget what it was."

"Then I may as well take my leave."

"Don't do that. You see, Mr. Dean, belonging to the church militant as you do, you are so heroically pugnacious! You must like fighting very much."

"When I have anything which I conceive it to be my duty to fight for, I think I do."

"Things are generally best got without fighting. You want to make your grandson Marquis of Brotherton."

"I want to ensure to my grandson anything that may be honestly and truly his own."

"You must first catch a grandson."

It was on his lips to say that certainly no heir should be caught on his side of the family after the fashion that had been practised by his lordship in catching the present pseudo-Popenjoy; but he was restrained by a feeling of delicacy in regard to his own daughter. "My lord," he said, "I am not here to discuss any such contingency."

"But you don't scruple to discuss my contingency, and that in the most public manner. It has suited me, or at any rate it has been my chance, to marry a foreigner. Because you don't understand Italian fashions you don't scruple to say that she is not my wife."

"I have never said so."

"And to declare that my son is not my son."

"I have never said that."

"And to set a dozen attorneys to work to prove that my heir is a bastard."

"We heard of your marriage, my lord, as having been fixed for a certain date—a date long subsequent to that of the birth of your son. What were we to think?"

"As if that hadn't been explained to you, and to all the world, a dozen times over. Did you never hear of a second marriage being solemnised in England to satisfy certain scruples? You have sent out and made your inquiries, and what have they come to? I know all about it."

"As far as I am concerned you are quite welcome to know everything."

"I daresay; even though I should be stung to death by the knowledge. Of course I understand. You think that I have no feeling at all."

"Not much as to duty to your family, certainly," said the Dean stoutly.

"Exactly. Because I stand a little in the way of your new ambition, I am the Devil himself. And yet you, and those who have abetted you, think it odd that I haven't received you with open arms. My boy is as much to me as ever was your daughter to you."

"Perhaps so, my lord. The question is not whether he is beloved, but whether he is Lord Popenjoy."

"He is Lord Popenjoy. He is a poor weakling, and I doubt whether he may enjoy the triumph long, but he is Lord Popenjoy. You must know it yourself, Dean."

"I know nothing of the kind," said the Dean furiously.

"Then you must be a very self-willed man. When this began George was joined with you in the unnatural inquiry. He at any rate has been convinced."

"It may be he has submitted himself to his brother's influence."

"Not in the least. George is not very clever, but he has at any rate had wit enough to submit to the influence of his own legal adviser—or rather to the influence of your legal adviser. Your own man, Mr. Battle, is convinced. You are going on with this in opposition even to him. What the devil is it you want? I am not dead, and may outlive at any rate you. Your girl hasn't got a child, and doesn't seem likely to have one. You happen to have married her into a noble family, and now, upon my word, it seems to me that you are a little off your head with downright pride."

"Was it for this you sent for me?"

"Well—yes, it was. I thought it might be as well to argue it out. It isn't likely that there should be much love between us, but we needn't cut each other's throats. It is costing us both a d—d lot of money; but I should think that my purse must be longer than yours."

"We will try it, my lord."

"You intend to go on with this persecution then?"

"The Countess Luigi was presumably a married woman when she bore that name, and I look upon it as a sacred duty to ascertain whether she was so or not."

"Sacred!" said the Marquis, with a sneer.

"Yes, sacred. There can be no more sacred duty than that which a father owes to his child."

"Ah!" Then the Marquis paused, and looked at the Dean before he went on speaking. He looked so long that the Dean was preparing to take his hat in his hand ready for a start. He showed that he was going to move, and then the Marquis went on speaking. "Sacred! Ah!—and such a child!"

"She is one of whom I am proud as a father, and you should be proud as a sister-in-law."

"Oh, of course. So I am. The Germaines were never so honoured before. As for her birth I care nothing about that. Had she behaved herself, I should have thought nothing of the stable."

"What do you dare to say?" said the Dean, jumping from his seat.

The Marquis sat leaning back in his arm-chair, perfectly motionless. There was a smile—almost a pleasant smile on his face. But there was a very devil in his eye, and the Dean, who stood some six feet removed from him, saw the devil plainly. "I live a solitary life here, Mr. Dean," said the Marquis, "but even I have heard of her."

"What have you heard?"

"All London have heard of her—this future Marchioness, whose ambition is to drive my son from his title and estates. A sacred duty, Mr. Dean, to put a coronet on the head of that young ——!" The word which we have not dared to print was distinctly

spoken—more distinctly, more loudly, more incisively, than any word which had yet fallen from the man's lips. It was evident that the lord had prepared the word, and had sent for the father that the father might hear the word applied to his own daughter—unless indeed he should first acknowledge himself to have lost his case. So far the interview had been carried out very much in accordance with the preparations as arranged by the Marquis; but, as to what followed, the Marquis had hardly made his calculations correctly.

A clergyman's coat used to save him from fighting in fighting days; and even in these days, in which broils and personal encounters are held to be generally disreputable, it saves the wearer from certain remote dangers to which other men are liable. And the reverse of this is also true. It would probably be hard to extract a first blow from the whole bench of bishops. And deans as a rule are more sedentary, more quiescent, more given to sufferance even than bishops. The normal dean is a goodly, sleek, bookish man, who would hardly strike a blow under any provocation. The Marquis, perhaps, had been aware of this. He had, perhaps, fancied that he was as good a man as the Dean, who was at least ten years his senior. He had not at any rate anticipated such speedy violence as followed the utterance of the abominable word.

The Dean, as I have said, had been standing about six feet from the easy-chair in which the Marquis was lolling when the word was spoken. He had already taken his hat in his hand and thought of some means of showing his indignation as he left the room. Now his first impulse was to rid himself of his hat,

which he did by pitching it along the floor. And then in an instant he was at the lord's throat. The lord had expected it so little that up to the last he made no preparation for defence. The Dean had got him by his cravat and shirt-collar before he had begun to expect such usage as this. Then he simply gurgled out some ejaculated oath, uttered half in surprise and half in prayer. Prayer certainly was now of no use. Had five hundred feet of rock been there the Marquis would have gone down it, though the Dean had gone with him. Fire flashed from the clergyman's eyes, and his teeth were set fast, and his very nostrils were almost ablaze. His daughter! The holy spot of his life! The one being in whom he believed with all his heart and with all his strength!

The Dean was fifty years of age, but no one had ever taken him for an old man. They who at home at Brotherton would watch his motions, how he walked and how he rode on horseback, how he would vault his gates when in the fields, and scamper across the country like a schoolboy, were wont to say that he was unclerical. Perhaps Canons Pountner and Holdenough, with Mr. Groschut, the bishop's chaplain, envied him something of his juvenile elasticity. But I think that none of them had given him credit for such strength as he now displayed. The Marquis, in spite of what feeble efforts he made, was dragged up out of his chair and made to stand, or rather to totter, on his legs. He made a clutch at the bell-rope, which, to aid his luxurious ease, had been brought close to his hand as he sat, but failed, as the Dean shook him hither and thither. Then he was dragged on to the middle of the rug, feeling by this time that he was going to be throttled. He attempted

to throw himself down, and would have done so, but that the Dean with his left hand prevented him from falling. He made one vigorous struggle to free himself, striving as he did so to call for assistance. But the Dean, having got his victim's back to the fireplace, and having the poor wretch now fully at his command, threw the man with all his strength into the empty grate. The Marquis fell like a heap within the fender, with his back against the top bar and his head driven farther back against the bricks and iron. There for a second or two he lay like a dead mass.

Less than a minute had done it all, and for so long a time the Dean's ungoverned fury had held its fire. What were consequences to him with that word as applied to his child ringing in his ears? How should he moderate his wrath under such outrage as that? Was it not as though beast had met beast in the forest between whom nothing but internecine fight to the end was possible? But when that minute was over, and he saw what he had done—when the man, tumbled, dishevelled, all a lump, and already bloody, was lying before him—then he remembered who he was himself and what it was that he had done. He was Dean Lovelace, who had already made for himself more than enough of clerical enmity; and this other man was the Marquis of Brotherton, whom he had perhaps killed in his wrath, with no witness by to say a word as to the provocation he had received.

The Marquis groaned and impotently moved an arm as though to raise himself. At any rate, he was not dead as yet. With a desire to do what was right now, the Dean rang the bell violently, and then stooped down to extricate his foe. He had succeeded in raising the man, and in seating him on the floor with

his head against the arm-chair before the servant came. Had he wished to conceal anything, he could without much increased effort have dragged the Marquis up into his chair; but he was anxious now simply that all the truth should be known. It seemed to him still that no one, knowing the real truth, would think that he had done wrong. His child! His daughter! His sweetly innocent daughter! The man soon rushed into the room, for the ringing of the bell had been very violent.

"Send for a doctor," said the Dean, "and send the landlord up."

"Has my lord had a fit?" said the man, advancing into the room. He was the servant, not of the hotel, but of the Marquis himself.

"Do as I bid you: get a doctor and send up the landlord immediately. It is not a fit, but his lordship has been much hurt. I knocked him down." The Dean made the last statement slowly and firmly, under a feeling at the moment that it became him to leave nothing concealed, even with a servant.

"He has murdered me," groaned the Marquis. The injured one could speak at least, and there was comfort in that. The servant rushed back to the regions below, and the tidings were soon spread through the house. Resident landlord there was none. There never are resident landlords in London hotels. Scumberg was a young family of joint heirs and heiresses, named Tomkins, who lived at Hastings, and the house was managed by Mrs. Walker. Mrs. Walker was soon in the room, with a German deputy-manager, kept to maintain the foreign Scumberg connection, and with them sundry waiters and the head-chambermaid. Mrs. Walker made a direct attack upon the

Dean, which was considerably weakened by accusations from the lips of the Marquis himself. Had he remained speechless for awhile, the horrors of the Dean's conduct would have been greatly aggravated. "My good woman," said the Dean, "wait till some official is here. You cannot understand. And get a little warm water and wash his lordship's head."

"He has broken my back," said his lordship. "Oh, oh, oh."

"I am glad to hear you speak, Lord Brotherton," said the Dean. "I think you will repent having used such a word as that to my daughter." It would be necessary now that everybody should understand everything; but how terrible would it be for the father even to say that such a name had been applied to his child!

First there came two policemen, then a surgeon, and then a sergeant. "I will do anything that you suggest, Mr. Constable," said the Dean, "though I hope it may not be necessary that I should remain in custody. I am the Dean of Brotherton." The sergeant made a sign of putting his finger up to his cap. "This man, as you know, is the Marquis of Brotherton." The sergeant bowed to the groaning nobleman. "My daughter is married to his brother. There have been family quarrels, and he just now applied a name to his own sister-in-law, to my child—which I will not utter because there are women here. Foulter slander never came from a man's mouth. I took him from his chair and threw him beneath the grate. Now you know it all. Were it to do again, I would do it again."

"She is a —," said the imprudent, prostrate Mar-

quis. The sergeant, the doctor who was now present, and Mrs. Walker suddenly became the Dean's friends. The Marquis was declared to be much shaken, to have a cut head, and to be very badly bruised about the muscles of the back. But a man who could so speak of his sister-in-law, deserved to have his head cut and his muscles bruised. Nevertheless the matter was too serious to be passed over without notice. The doctor could not say that the unfortunate nobleman had received no permanent injury—and the sergeant had not an opportunity of dealing with deans and marquises every day of his life. The doctor remained with his august patient and had him put to bed, while the Dean and the sergeant together went off in a cab to the police-office, which lies in the little crowded streets between the crooked part of Regent Street and Piccadilly. Here depositions were taken and forms filled, and the Dean was allowed to depart with an understanding that he was to be forthcoming immediately when wanted. He suggested that it had been his intention to go down to Brotherton on the following day, but the superintendent of police recommended him to abandon that idea. The superintendent thought that the Dean had better make arrangements to stay in London till the end of the week.

CHAPTER X

"NOT GO!"

THE Dean had a great deal to think of as he walked home a little too late for his daughter's usual dinner hour. What should he tell her—and what should he do as to communicating or not communicating tidings of the day's work to Lord George? Of course everybody must know what had been done, sooner or later. He would have had no objection to that—providing the truth could be told accurately—except as to the mention of his daughter's name in the same sentence with that abominable word. But the word would surely be known, and the facts would not be told with accuracy unless he told them himself. His only, but his fully sufficient defence was in the word. But who would know the tone? Who would understand the look of the man's eyes and the smile on his mouth? Who could be made to conceive, as the Dean himself had conceived, the aggravated injury of the premeditated slander? He would certainly write and tell Lord George everything. But to his daughter he thought that he would tell as little as possible. Might God in his mercy save her ears, her sacred feelings, her pure heart from the wound of that word! He felt that she was dearer to him than ever she had been—that he would give up Deanery and everything if he could save her by doing so. But he felt that if she were to be sacrificed in the contest, he would give up Deanery and everything in avenging her.

But something must be told to her. He at any rate must remain in town, and it would be very desirable that she should stay with him. If she went alone she would at once be taken to Cross Hall; and he could understand that the recent occurrence would not add to the serenity of her life there. The name that had been applied to her, together with the late folly of which her husband had been guilty, would give those Manor Cross dragons—as the Dean was apt in his own thoughts to call the Ladies Germain—a tremendous hold over her. And should she be once at Cross Hall, he would hardly be able to get her back to the Deanery.

He hurried up to dress as soon as he reached the house, with a word of apology as to being late, and then found her in the drawing-room. "Papa," she said, "I do like Mrs. Montacute Jones."

"So do I, my dear, because she is good-humoured."

"But she is so good-natured also! She has been her again to-day, and wants me and George to go down to Scotland in August. I should so like it."

"What will George say?"

"Of course he won't go; and of course I shan't. But that doesn't make it the less good-natured. She wishes all her set to think that what happened the other night doesn't mean anything."

"I'm afraid he won't consent."

"I know he won't. He wouldn't know what to do with himself. He hates a house full of people. And now tell me what the Marquis said." But dinner was announced, and the Dean was not forced to answer this question immediately.

"Now, papa," she said again, as soon as the coffee was brought and the servant was gone, "do tell me

what my most noble brother-in-law wanted to say to you."

That he certainly would not tell. "Your brother-in-law, my dear, behaved about as badly as a man could behave."

"Oh, dear! I am so sorry!"

"We have to be sorry—both of us. And your husband will be sorry." He was so serious that she hardly knew how to speak to him. "I cannot tell you everything; but he insulted me, and I was forced to—strike him."

"Strike him! Oh, papa!"

"Bear with me, Mary. In all things I think well of you, and do you try to think well of me."

"Dear papa! I will. I do. I always did."

"Anything he might have said of myself I could have borne. He could have applied no epithet to me which, I think, could even have ruffled me. But he spoke evil of you." While he was sitting there he made up his mind that he would tell her as much as that, though he had before almost resolved that he would not speak to her of herself. But she must hear something of the truth, and better that she should hear it from his than from other lips. She turned very pale, but did not immediately make any reply. "Then I was full of wrath," he continued. "I did not even attempt to control myself; but I took him by the throat and flung him violently to the ground. He fell upon the grate, and it may be that he has been hurt. Had the fall killed him he would have deserved it. He had courage to wound a father in his tenderest part, only because that father was a clergyman. His belief in a black coat will, I think, be a little weakened by what occurred to-day."

"What will be done?" she asked, whispering.

"Heaven only knows. But I can't go out of town to-morrow. I shall write to George to-night and tell him everything that has occurred, and shall beg that you may be allowed to stay with me for the few days that will be necessary."

"Of course I will not leave you."

"It is not that. But I do not want you to go to Cross Hall quite at present. If you went without me, they would not let you come to the Deanery. Of course there will be a great commotion at Cross Hall. Of course they will condemn me. Many will condemn me, as it will be impossible to make the world believe the exact truth."

"I will never condemn you," she said. Then she came over and threw herself on her knees at his feet, and embraced him. "But, papa, what did the man say of me?"

"Not what he believed—but what he thought would give me the greatest anguish. Never mind. Do not ask any more questions. You also had better write to your husband, and you can tell him fully all that I have told you. If you will write to-night I will do so also, and I will take care that they shall have our letters to-morrow afternoon. We must send a message to say that we shall not be at the Deanery to-morrow." The two letters to Lord George were both written that night, and were both very long. They told the same story, though in a different tone. The Dean was by no means apologetic, but was very full and very true. When he came to the odious word he could not write it, but he made it very clear without writing. Would not the husband feel as he, the father, had felt in regard to his young wife, the sweet pure

girl of whose love and possession he ought to be so proud? How would any brother be forgiven who had assailed such a treasure as this—much less such a brother as this Marquis? Perhaps Lord George might think it right to come up. The Dean would of course call at the hotel on the following day, and would go to the police-office. He believed, he said, that no permanent injury had been done. Then came, perhaps, the pith of his letter. He trusted that Lord George would agree with him in thinking that Mary had better remain with him in town during the two or three days of his necessarily prolonged sojourn. This was put in the form of a request; but was put in a manner intended to show that the request, if not granted, would be enforced. The Dean was fully determined that Mary should not at once go down to Cross Hall.

Her letter was supplicatory, spasmodic, full of sorrow, and full of love. She was quite sure that her dear papa would have done nothing that he ought not to have done; but yet she was very sorry for the Marquis, because of his mother and sisters, and because of her dear, dear George. Could he not run up to them and hear all about it from papa? If the Marquis had said ill-natured things of her, it was very cruel, because nobody loved her husband better than she loved her dear, dear George—and so on. The letters were then sent under cover to the house-keeper at the Deanery, with orders to send them on by private messengers to Cross Hall.

On the following day the Dean went to Scumberg's, but could not learn much there. The Marquis had been very bad, and had had one and another doctor with him almost continually; but Mrs. Walker

could not take upon herself to say that "it was dangerous." She thought it was "in'ard." Mrs. Walkers always do think that it is "in'ard," when there is nothing palpable outward. At any rate his lordship had not been out of bed, and had taken nothing but tapioca and brandy. There was very little more than this to be learned at the police-court. The case might be serious, but the superintendent hoped otherwise. The superintendent did not think that the Dean should go down quite to-morrow. The morrow was Friday; but he suggested Saturday as possible, Monday as almost certain. It may be as well to say here that the Dean did not call at the police-court again, and heard nothing further from the officers of the law respecting the occurrence at Scumberg's. On the Friday he called again at Scumberg's, and the Marquis was still in bed. His "in'ards" had not ceased to be matter of anxiety to Mrs. Walker; but the surgeon, whom the Dean now saw, declared that the muscles of the nobleman's back were more deserving of sympathy. The surgeon, with a gravity that almost indicated offence, expressed his opinion that the Marquis's back had received an injury which—which might be—very injurious.

Lord George, when he received the letters, was thrown into a state of mind that almost distracted him. During the last week or two the animosity felt at Cross Hall against the Marquis had been greatly weakened. A feeling had come upon the family that after all Popenjoy was Popenjoy; and that, although the natal circumstances of such a Popenjoy were doubtless unfortunate for the family generally, still, as an injury had been done to the Marquis by the suspicion, those circumstances ought now to be in

a measure forgiven. The Marquis was the head of the family, and a family will forgive much to its head when that head is a Marquis. As we know, the Dowager had been in his favour from the first; Lord George had lately given way and had undergone a certain amount of reconciliation with his brother. Lady Amelia had seceded to her mother, as had also Mrs. Toff, the old housekeeper. Lady Susanna was wavering, having had her mind biased by the objectionable conduct of the Dean and his daughter. Lady Sarah was more stanch. Lady Sarah had never yet given way; she never did give way; and, in her very heart, she was the best friend that Mary had among the ladies of the family. But when her brother gave up the contest she felt that further immediate action was impossible. Things were in this strait at Cross Hall when Lord George received the two letters. He did not wish to think well of the Dean just at present, and was horrified at the idea of a clergyman knocking a marquis into the fireplace. But the word indicated was very plain, and that word had been applied to his own wife. Or, perhaps, no such word had really been used. Perhaps the Dean had craftily saved himself from an absolute lie, and in his attempt to defend the violence of his conduct had brought an accusation against the Marquis which was, in its essence, untrue. Lord George was quite alive to the duty of defending his wife; but in doing so he was no longer anxious to maintain affectionate terms with his wife's father. She had been very foolish. All the world had admitted as much. He had seen it with his own eyes at that wretched ball. She had suffered her name to be joined with that of a stranger in a manner derogatory to her husband's honour. It

was hardly surprising that his brother should have spoken of her conduct in disparaging terms; but he did not believe that his brother had used that special term. Personal violence—blows and struggling, and that on the part of a Dean of the Church of England, and violence such as this seemed to have been—violence that might have killed the man attacked, seemed to him to be in any case unpardonable. He certainly could not live on terms of friendship with the Dean immediately after such a deed. His wife must be taken away and secluded, and purified by a long course of Germain asceticism.

But what must he do now at once? He felt that it was his duty to hurry up to London, but he could not bring himself to live in the same house with the Dean. His wife must be taken away from her father. However bad may have been the language used by the Marquis, however indefensible, he could not allow himself even to seem to keep up affectionate relations with the man who had half-slaughtered his brother. He, too, thought of what the world would say; he, too, felt that such an affair, after having become known to the police, would be soon known to everyone else. But what must he do at once? He had not as yet made up his mind as to this when he took his place at the Brotherton Railway Station on the morning after he had received the letters.

But, on reaching the station in London, he had so far made up his mind as to have his portmanteau taken to the hotel close at hand, and then to go to Munster Court. He had hoped to find his wife alone; but on his arrival the Dean was there also. "Oh, George," she said, "I am so glad you have come;

where are your things?" He explained that he had no things, that he had come up only for a short time, and had left his luggage at the station. "But you will stay here to-night?" asked Mary, in despair.

Lord George hesitated, and the Dean at once saw how it was. "You will not go back to Brotherton to-day," he said. Now, at this moment the Dean had to settle in his mind the great question whether it would be best for his girl that she should be separated from her husband or from her father. In giving him his due it must be acknowledged that he considered only what might in truth be best for her. If she were now taken away from him there would be no prospect of recovery. After all that had passed, after Lord George's submission to his brother, the Dean was sure that he would be held in abhorrence by the whole Germain family. Mary would be secluded and trodden on, and reduced to pale submission by all the dragons till her life would be miserable. Lord George himself would be prone enough to domineer in such circumstances. And then that ill word which had been spoken, and which could only be effectually burned out of the thoughts of people by a front to the world at the same time innocent and bold, would stick to her forever if she were carried away into obscurity.

But the Dean knew as well as others know how great is the evil of a separation, and how specially detrimental such a step would be to a young wife. Than a permanent separation anything would be better; better even that she should be secluded and maligned, and even, for awhile, trodden under foot. Were such separation to take place, his girl would have been altogether sacrificed, and her life's happi-

ness brought to shipwreck. But then a permanent separation was not probable. She had done nothing wrong. The husband and wife did in truth love each other dearly. The Marquis would be soon gone, and then Lord George would return to his old habits of thought and his old allegiance. Upon the whole, the Dean thought it best that his present influence should be used in taking his daughter to the Deanery.

"I should like to return quite early to-morrow," said Lord George, very gravely, "unless my brother's condition should make it impossible."

"I trust you won't find your brother much the worse for what has happened," said the Dean.

"But you will sleep here to-night?" repeated Mary.

"I will come for you the first thing in the morning," said Lord George in the same funereal voice.

"But why—why?"

"I shall probably have to be a good deal with my brother during the afternoon. But I will be here again in the afternoon. You can be at home at five, and you can get your things ready for going to-morrow."

"Won't you dine here?"

"I think not."

Then there was silence for a minute. Mary was completely astounded. Lord George wished to say nothing further in the presence of his father-in-law. The Dean was thinking how he would begin to use his influence. "I trust you will not take Mary away to-morrow."

"Oh!—certainly."

"I trust not. I must ask you to hear me say a few words about this."

"I must insist on her coming with me to-morrow,

even though I should have to return to London myself afterwards."

"Mary," said her father, "leave us for a moment." Then Mary retired, with a very saddened air. "Do you understand, George, what it was that your brother said to me?"

"I suppose so," he answered hoarsely.

"Then, no doubt, I may take it for granted that you approve of the violence of my resentment? To me, as a clergyman and as a man past middle life, the position was very trying. But had I been an archbishop, tottering on the grave with years, I must have endeavoured to do the same." This he said with great energy. "Tell me, George, that you think that I was right."

But George had not heard the word, had not seen the man's face. And then, though he would have gone to a desert island with his wife, had such exile been necessary for her protection, he did believe that she had misconducted herself. Had he not seen her whirling round the room with that man after she had been warned against him. "It cannot be right to murder a man," he said at last.

"You do not thank me, then, for vindicating your honour and your wife's innocence?"

"I do not think that that was the way. The way is to take her home."

"Yes; to her old home—to the Deanery for awhile; so that the world, which will no doubt hear the malignant epithet applied to her by your wicked brother, may know that both her husband and her father support her. You had promised to come to the Deanery."

"We cannot do that now."

"Do you mean that, after what has passed, you will take your brother's part?"

"I will take my wife to Cross Hall," he said, leaving the room, and following Mary up to her chamber.

"What am I to do, papa?" she said, when she came down about half an hour afterwards. Lord George had then started to Scumberg's, saying that he would come to Munster Court again before dinner, but telling her plainly that he would not sit down to dine with her father. "He has determined to quarrel with you."

"It will only be for a time, dearest."

"But what shall I do?"

Now came the peril of the answer. He was sure, almost sure, that she would in this emergency rely rather upon him than on her husband, if he were firm; but should he be firm as against the husband, how great would be his responsibility! "I think, my dear," he said at last, "that you should go with me to Brotherton."

"But he will not let me."

"I think that you should insist on his promise."

"Don't make us quarrel, papa."

"Certainly not. Anything would be better than a permanent quarrel. But, after what has been said, after the foul lies that have been told, I think that you should assert your purpose of staying for awhile with your father. Were you now to go to Cross Hall there would be no limit to their tyranny."

He left her without a word more, and calling at Scumberg's Hotel, was told that the Marquis could not move.

At that moment Lord George was with his brother, and the Marquis could talk though he could not move.

"A precious family you've married into, George," he said, almost as soon as his brother was in the room. Then he gave his own version of the affair, leaving his brother in doubt as to the exact language that had been used. "He ought to have been a coalheaver instead of a clergyman," said the Marquis.

"Of course he would be angry," said Lord George.

"Nothing astonishes me so much," said the Marquis, "as the way in which you fellows here think you may say whatever comes into your head about my wife, because she is an Italian, and you seem to be quite surprised if I object; yet you rage like wild beasts if the compliment is returned. Why am I to think better of your wife than you of mine?"

"I have said nothing against your wife, Brother-ton."

"By —, I think you have said a great deal—and with much less reason than I have. What did you do yourself when you found her struggling in that fellow's arms at the old woman's party?" Some good-natured friend had told the Marquis the whole story of the Kappa-kappa. "You can't be deaf to what all the world is saying of her." This was worm-wood to the wretched husband, and yet he could not answer with angry, self-reliant indignation, while his brother was lying almost motionless before him.

Lord George found that he could do nothing at Scumberg's Hotel. He was assured that his brother was not in danger, and that the chief injury done was to the muscles of his back, which, bruised and lacerated as they were, would gradually recover such elasticity as they had ever possessed. But other words were said and other hints expressed, all of which tended to increase his animosity against the Dean,

and almost to engender anger against his wife. To himself, personally, except in regard to his wife, his brother had not been ungracious. The Marquis intended to return to Italy as soon as he could. He hated England and everything in it. Manor Cross would very soon be at Lord George's disposal, "though I do hope," said the Marquis, "that the lady who has condescended to make me her brother-in-law, will never reign paramount there." By degrees there crept on Lord George's mind a feeling that his brother looked to a permanent separation—something like a repudiation. Over and over again he spoke of Mary as though she had disgraced herself utterly; and when Lord George defended his wife, the lord only smiled and sneered.

The effect upon Lord George was to make him very imperious as he walked back to Munster Court. He could not repudiate his wife, but he would take her away with a very high hand. Crossing the Green Park, at the back of Arlington Street, whom should he meet but Mrs. Houghton with her cousin Jack. He raised his hat, but could not stop a moment. Mrs. Houghton made an attempt to arrest him—but he escaped without a word and went on very quickly. His wife had behaved generously about Mrs. Houghton. The sight of the woman brought that truth to his mind. He was aware of that. But no generosity on the part of the wife, no love, no temper, no virtue, no piety can be accepted by Cæsar as weighing a grain in counterpoise against even suspicion.

He found his wife and asked her whether her things were being packed. "I cannot go to-morrow," she said.

"Not go!"

"No, George—not to Cross Hall. I will go to the Deanery. You promised to go to the Deanery."

"I will not go to the Deanery. I will go to Cross Hall." There was an hour of it, but during the entire hour, the young wife persisted obstinately that she would not be taken to Cross Hall. "She had," she said, "been very badly treated by her husband's family." "Not by me," shouted the husband. She went on to say that nothing could now really put her right but the joint love of her father and her husband. Were she at Cross Hall her father could do nothing for her. She would not go to Cross Hall. Nothing short of policemen should take her to Cross Hall to-morrow.

CHAPTER XI

REAL LOVE

"He is looking awfully cut up," Mrs. Houghton said to her cousin.

"He is one of the most infernal fools that ever I came across in my life," said Jack.

"I don't see that he is a fool at all—any more than all men are fools. There isn't one among you is ever able to keep his little troubles to himself. You are not a bit wiser than the rest of them yourself."

"I haven't got any troubles—of that sort."

"You haven't a wife—but you'll be forced into having one before long. And when you like another man's wife you can't keep all the world from knowing it."

"All the world may know everything that has taken place between me and Lady George," said Jack. "Of course I like her."

"I should say, rather."

"And so do you."

"No, I don't, sir. I don't like her at all. She is a foolish, meaningless little creature, with nothing to recommend her but a pretty colour. And she has cut me because her husband will come and pour out his sorrow into my ears. For his sake I used to be good to her."

"I think she is the sweetest human being I ever came across in my life," said Jack enthusiastically.

"Everybody in London knows that you think so, and that you have told her your thoughts."

"Nobody in London knows anything of the kind. I never said a word to her that her husband mightn't have heard."

"Jack!"

"I never did."

"I wonder you are not ashamed to confess such simplicity, even to me."

"I am not a bit ashamed of that, though I am ashamed of having in some sort contributed to do her an injury. Of course I love her."

"Rather—as I said before."

"Of course you intended that I should."

"I intended that you should amuse yourself. As long as you are good to me, I shall be good to you."

"My dear Adelaide, nobody can be so grateful as I am. But in this matter the thing hasn't gone quite as you intended. You say that she is meaningless."

"Vapid, flabby, childish, and innocent as a baby."

"Innocent, I am sure she is. Vapid and flabby she certainly is not. She is full of fun, and is quite as witty as a woman should be."

"You always liked fools, Jack."

"Then how did I come to be so very fond of you?" In answer to this she merely made a grimace at him. "I hadn't known her three days," continued he, "before I began to feel how impossible it would be to say anything to her that ought not to be said."

"That is just like the world all over," said Mrs. Houghton. "When a man really falls in love with a woman he always makes her such a goddess that he doesn't dare to speak to her. The effect is that women are obliged to put up with men who ain't in love

with them—either that, or vouchsafe to tell their own little story—when, lo, they are goddesses no longer.”

“I daresay it’s very ridiculous,” said Jack, in a mooning, despondent way. “I daresay I’m not the man I ought to be after the advantages I have had in such friends as you and others.”

“If you try to be severe to me, I’ll quarrel with you.”

“Not severe at all. I’m quite in earnest. A man, and a woman too, have to choose which kind of *rôle* shall be played. There is innocence and purity combined with going to church and seeing that the children’s faces are washed. The game is rather slow, but it lasts a long time, and leads to great capacity for digesting your dinner in old age. You and I haven’t gone in for that.”

“Do you mean to say that I am not innocent?”

“Then there is the Devil with all his works—which I own are, for the most part, pleasant works to me. I have always had a liking for the Devil.”

“Jack!”

“Of all the saints going he is certainly the most popular. It is pleasant to ignore the commandments and enjoy the full liberty of a debauched conscience. But there are attendant evils. It costs money and wears out the constitution.”

“I should have thought that you had never felt the latter evil.”

“The money goes first, no doubt. This, however, must surely be clear. A man should make up his mind, and not shilly-shally between the two.”

“I should have thought you had made up your mind very absolutely.”

“I thought so, too, Adelaide, till I knew Lady

George Germain. I'll tell you what I feel about her now. If I could have any hope that he would die I would put myself into some reformatory to fit myself to be her second husband."

"Good heavens!"

"That is one idea that I have. Another is to cut his throat, and take my chance with the widow. She is simply the only woman I ever saw that I have liked all round."

"You come and tell me this, knowing what I think of her."

"Why shouldn't I tell you? You don't want me to make love to you?"

"But a woman never cares to hear all these praises of another."

"It was you began it, and if I do speak of her I shall tell the truth. There is a freshness as of uncut flowers about her."

"Psha! Worms and grubs!"

"And when she laughs one dreams of a chaste Venus."

"My heavens, Jack! You should publish all that!"

"The dimples on her cheeks are so alluring that I would give my commission to touch them once with my finger. When I first knew her I thought that the time would come when I might touch them. Now I feel that I would not commit such an outrage to save myself from being cashiered."

"Shall I tell you what you ought to do?"

"Hang myself."

"Just say to her all that you have said to me. You would soon find that her dimples are not more holy than another's."

"You think so."

"Of course I think so. The only thing that puzzles me is that you, Jack de Baron, should be led away to such idolatry. Why should she be different from others? Her father is a money-loving, selfish old reprobate, who was born in a stable. She married the first man that was brought to her, and has never cared for him because he does not laugh, and dance, and enjoy himself after her fashion. I don't suppose she is capable of caring very much for anybody, but she likes you better than anyone else. Have you seen her since the row at Mrs. Jones's?"

"No."

"You have not been, then?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't think she would wish to see me," said Jack. "All that affair must have troubled her."

"I don't know how that is. She has been in town ever since, and he certainly went down to Brotherton. He has come up, I suppose, in consequence of this row between the Dean and his brother. I wonder what really did happen?"

"They say that there was a scuffle and that the parson had very much the best of it. The police were sent for, and all that kind of thing. I suppose the Marquis said something very rough to him."

"Or he to the Marquis, which is rather more likely. Well, good-day, Jack." They were now at the house-door in Berkeley Square. "Don't come in, because Houghton will be here." Then the door was opened. "But take my advice, and go and call in Munster Court at once. And, believe me, when you have found out what one woman is, you have found out

what most women are. There are no such great differences."

It was then six o'clock, and he knew that in Munster Court they did not dine till near eight. There was still time with a friend so intimate as he was for what is styled a morning call. The words which his cousin had spoken had not turned him—had not convinced him. Were he again tempted to speak his real mind about this woman—as he had spoken in very truth his real mind—he would still express the same opinion. She was to him like a running stream to a man who had long bathed in stagnant waters. But the hideous doctrines which his cousin had preached to him were not without their effect. If she were as other women—meaning such women as Adelaide Houghton—or if she were not, why should he not find out the truth? He was well aware that she liked him. She had not scrupled to show him that by many signs. Why should he scruple to say a word that might show him how the wind blew? Then he remembered a few words which he had spoken, but which had been taken so innocently, that they, though they had meant to be mischievous, had become innocent themselves. Even things impure became pure by contact with her. He was sure, quite sure, that the well-known pupil of Satan, his cousin, was altogether wrong in her judgment. He knew that Adelaide Houghton could not recognise, and could not appreciate, a pure woman. But still—still it is so poor a thing to miss your plum because you do not dare to shake the tree! It is especially so, if you are known as a professional stealer of plums!

When he got into Piccadilly, he put himself into a cab, and had himself driven to the corner of

Munster Court. It was a little street, gloomy to look at, with dingy doors and small houses, but with windows looking into St. James's Park. There was no way through it, so that he who entered it must either make his way into some house, or come back. He walked up to the door, and then taking out his watch, saw that it was half-past six. It was almost too late for calling. And then this thing that he intended to do required more thought than he had given it. Would it not be well for him that there should be something holy, even to him, in spite of that Devil's advocate who had been so powerful with him? So he turned, and walking slowly back towards Parliament Street, got into another cab, and was taken to his club. "It has come out," said Major M'Mickmack to him, immediately on his entrance, "that when the Dean went to see Brotherton at the hotel, Brotherton called Lady George all the bad names he could put his tongue to."

"I daresay. He is blackguard enough for anything," said De Baron.

"Then the old Dean took his lordship in his arms, and pitched him bang into the fireplace. I had it all from the police myself."

"I always liked the Dean."

"They say he is as strong as Hercules," continued M'Mickmack. "But he is to lose his deanery."

"Gammon!"

"You just ask any of the fellows that know. Fancy a clergyman pitching a marquis into the fire!"

"Fancy a father not doing so if the marquis spoke ill of his daughter!" said Jack de Baron.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT THE BROTHERTON CLERGYMEN SAID ABOUT IT

HAD Jack knocked at the door and asked for Lady George he certainly would not have seen her. She was enduring at that moment, with almost silent obstinacy, the fierce anger of her indignant husband. "She was sure that it would be bad for her to go to Cross Hall at present, or anywhere among the Germaines, while such things were said of her as the Marquis had said." Could Lord George have declared that the Marquis was at war with the family as he had been at war some weeks since, this argument would have fallen to the ground. But he could not do so, and it seemed to be admitted that by going to Cross Hall she was to take part against her father, and so far to take part with the Marquis, who had maligned her. This became her strong point, and, as Lord George was not strong in argument, he allowed her to make the most of it. "Surely you wouldn't let me go anywhere," she said, "where such names as that are believed against me?" She had not heard the name, nor had he, and they were in the dark; but she had pleaded her cause well, and appealed again and again to her husband's promise to take her to the Deanery. His stronghold was that of marital authority—authority unbounded, legitimate, and not to be questioned. "But if you commanded me to quarrel with papa?" she asked.

"I have commanded nothing of the kind."

"But if you did?"

"Then you must quarrel with him."

"I couldn't—and I wouldn't," said she, burying her face upon the arm of the sofa.

At any rate, on the next morning she didn't go, nor, indeed, did he come to fetch her, so convinced had he been of the persistency of her obstinacy. But he told her as he left her that if she separated herself from him now, then the separation must be lasting. Her father, however, foreseeing this threat, had told her just the reverse. "He is an obstinate man," the Dean had said, "but he is good and conscientious, and he loves you."

"I hope he loves me."

"I am sure he does. He is not a fickle man. At present he has put himself into his brother's hands, and we must wait till the tide turns. He will learn by degrees to know how unjust he has been."

So it came to pass that Lord George went down to Cross Hall in the morning, and that Mary accompanied her father to the Deanery the same afternoon. The Dean had already learned that it would be well that he should face his clerical enemies as soon as possible. He had already received a letter worded in friendly terms from the bishop, asking him whether he would not wish to make some statement as to the occurrence at Scumberg's Hotel which might be made known to the clergymen of the cathedral. He had replied by saying that he wished to make no such statement, but that on his return to Brotherton he would be very willing to tell the bishop the whole story if the bishop wished to hear it. He had been conscious of Mr. Groschut's hand even among the civil phrases which had come from the

bishop himself. "In such a matter," he said in his reply, "I am amenable to the laws of the land, and am not, as I take it, amenable to any other authority." Then he went on to say that for his own satisfaction he should be very glad to tell the story to the bishop.

The story as it reached Brotherton had, no doubt, given rise to a great deal of scandal and a great deal of amusement. Pountner and Holdenough were to some extent ashamed of their bellicose Dean. There is something ill-mannered, ungentlemanlike, what we now call rowdy, in personal encounters, even among laymen—and this is of course aggravated when the assailant is a clergyman. And these canons, though they kept up pleasant social relations with the Dean, were not ill-disposed to make use of so excellent a weapon against a man, who, though coming from a lower order than themselves, was never disposed in any way to yield to them. But the two canons were gentlemen, and as gentlemen were gracious. Though they liked to have the Dean on the hip, they did not want to hurt him sorely when they had gotten him there. They would be contented with certain sly allusions, and only half-expressed triumphs. But Mr. Groschut was confirmed in his opinion that the Dean was altogether unfit for his position, which, for the interests of the Church, should be filled by some such man as Mr. Groschut himself—by some Godfearing clergyman, not known as a hard rider across country and as a bruiser with his fists. There had been an article in *The Brotherton Church Gazette*, in which an anxious hope was expressed that some explanation would be given of the very incredible tidings which had unfortunately reached Brotherton. Then Mr. Groschut had spoken a word in

season to the bishop. Of course, he said, it could not be true; but would it not be well that the Dean should be invited to make his own statement? It was indeed Mr. Groschut himself who had used the word "incredible" in the article. Mr. Groschut, in speaking to the bishop, said that the tidings must be untrue. And yet he believed, and rejoiced in believing, every word of them. He was a pious man, and did not know that he was lying. He was an anxious Christian, and did not know that he was doing his best to injure an enemy behind his back. He hated the Dean; but he thought that he loved him. He was sure that the Dean would go to some unpleasant place, and gloried in the certainty; but he thought that he was most anxious for the salvation of the Dean's soul. "I think your lordship owes it to him to offer him the opportunity," said Mr. Groschut.

The bishop, too, was what we call a severe man, but his severity was used chiefly against himself. He was severe in his principles; but, knowing the world better than his chaplain, was aware how much latitude it was necessary that he should allow in dealing with men. And in his heart of hearts he had a liking for the Dean. Whenever there were any tiffs the Dean could take a blow and give a blow, and then think no more about it. This, which was a virtue in the eyes of the bishop, was no virtue at all to Mr. Groschut, who hated to be hit himself, and wished to think that his own blows were fatal. In urging the matter with the bishop, Mr. Groschut expressed an opinion that, if this story were unfortunately true, the Dean should cease to be Dean. He thought that the Dean must see this himself. "I am given to understand that he was absolutely in

custody of the police," said Mr. Groschut. The Bishop was annoyed by his chaplain, but still he wrote the letter.

On the very morning of his arrival in Brotherton the Dean went to the Palace. "Well, my lord," said the Dean, "you have heard this cock-and-bull story."

"I have heard a story," said the Bishop. He was an old man, very tall and very thin, looking as though he had crushed out of himself all taste for the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, but singularly urbane in his manner, with an old-fashioned politeness. He smiled as he invited the Dean to a seat, and then expressed a hope that nobody had been much hurt. "Very serious injuries have been spoken of here, but I know well how rumour magnifies these things."

"Had I killed him, my lord, I should have been neither more nor less to blame than I am now, for I certainly endeavoured to do my worst to him." The Bishop's face assumed a look of pain and wonder. "When I had the miscreant in my hands I did not pause to measure the weight of my indignation. He told me, me a father, that my child was——" He had risen from his chair, and, as he pronounced the word, stood looking into the Bishop's eyes. "If there be purity on earth, sweet feminine modesty, playfulness devoid of guile, absolute freedom from any stain of leprosy, they are to be found with my girl."

"Yes, yes; I am sure of that."

"She is my worldly treasure. I have none other. I desire none other. I had wounded this man by certain steps which I have taken in reference to his family—and then, that he might wound me in return;

he did not scruple to use that word to his own sister-in-law, to my daughter. Was that a time to consider whether a clergyman may be justified in putting out his strength! No, my lord. Old as you are you would have attempted it yourself. I took him up and smote him, and it is not my fault if he is not a cripple for life." The Bishop gazed at him speechlessly, but felt quite sure that it was not in his power to rebuke his fellow-clergyman. "Now, my lord," continued the Dean, "you have heard the story. I tell it to you, and I shall tell it to no one else. I tell it you, not because you are the bishop of this diocese, and I the Dean of this cathedral—and as such, I am in such a matter by no means subject to your lordship's authority—but, because of all my neighbours you are the most respected, and I would wish that the truth should be known to someone." Then he ceased, neither enjoining secrecy, nor expressing any wish that the story should be correctly told to others.

"He must be a cruel man," said the Bishop.

"No, my lord—he is no man at all. He is a degraded animal, unfortunately placed almost above penalties by his wealth and rank. I am glad to think that he has at last encountered some little punishment, though I could wish that the use of the scourge had fallen into other hands than mine." Then he took his leave, and as he went the Bishop was very gracious to him.

"I am almost inclined to think he was justified," said the Bishop to Mr. Groschut.

"Justified, my lord! The Dean—in striking the Marquis of Brotherton, and then falling into the hands of the police!"

"I know nothing about the police."

"May I ask your lordship what was his account of the transaction?"

"I cannot give it you. I simply say that I think that he was justified." Then Mr. Groschut expressed his opinion to Mrs. Groschut that the Bishop was getting old—very old indeed. Mr. Groschut was almost afraid that no good could be done in the diocese till a firmer and a younger man sat in the seat.

The main facts of the story came to the knowledge of the canons, though I doubt whether the Bishop ever told all that was told to him. Some few hard words were said. Canon Pountner made a remark in the Dean's hearing about the Church militant, which drew forth from the Dean an allusion to the rites of Bacchus, which the canon only half-understood. And Dr. Holdenough asked the Dean whether there had not been some little trouble between him and the Marquis. "I am afraid you have been a little hard upon my noble brother-in-law," said the Doctor. To which the Dean replied that the Doctor should teach his noble brother-in-law better manners. But, upon the whole, the Dean held his own well, and was as carefully waited upon to his seat by the vergers as though there had been no scene at Scumberg's Hotel.

For a time, no doubt, there was a hope on the part of Mr. Groschut and his adherents that there would be some further police interference; that the Marquis would bring an action, or that the magistrate would demand some inquiry. But nothing was done. The Marquis endured his bruised back at any rate in silence. But there came tidings to Brotherton that his lordship would not again be seen at Manor Cross

that year. The house had been kept up as though for him, and he had certainly declared his purpose of returning when he left the place. He had indeed spoken of living there almost to the end of autumn. But early in July it became known that when he left Scumberg's Hotel, he would go abroad—and before the middle of July it was intimated to Lady Alice, and through her to all Brotherton, that the Dowager, with her daughters and Lord George, were going back to the old house.

In the meantime Lady George was still at the Deanery, and Lord George at Cross Hall, and to the eyes of the world the husband had been separated from his wife. His anger was certainly very deep, especially against his wife's father. The fact that his commands had been twice—nay, as he said, thrice—disobeyed rankled in his mind. He had ordered her not to waltz, and she had waltzed with, as Lord George thought, the most objectionable man in all London. He had ordered her to leave town with him immediately after Mrs. Jones's ball, and she had remained in town. He had ordered her now to leave her father and to cleave to him; but she had clave to her father and had deserted him. What husband can do other than repudiate his wife under such circumstances as these! He was moody, gloomy, silent, never speaking of her, never going into Brotherton lest by chance he should see her; but always thinking of her—and always, always longing for her company.

She talked of him daily to her father, and was constant in her prayer that they should not be made to quarrel. Having so long doubted whether she could ever love him, she now could not understand the strength of her own feeling. "Papa, mightn't I

write to him?" she said. But her father thought that she should not herself take the first step, at any rate, till the Marquis was gone. It was she who had, in fact, been injured, and the overture should come from the other side. Then at last, in a low whisper, hiding her face, she told her father a great secret, adding, with a voice a little raised: "Now, papa, I must write to him."

"My darling, my dearest," said the Dean, leaning over and kissing her with more than his usual demonstration of love.

"I may write now?"

"Yes, dear, you should certainly tell him that."

Then the Dean went out and walked round the Deanery garden, and the Cathedral cloisters, and the Close, assuring himself that after a very little while the real Lord Popenjoy would be his own grandson.

CHAPTER XIII

LADY GEORGE AT THE DEANERY

It took Mary a long, long morning—not altogether an unhappy morning—to write her letter to her husband. She was forced to make many attempts before she could tell the great news in a fitting way, and even when the telling was done she was very far from being satisfied with the manner of it. There should have been no necessity that such tidings should be told by letter. It was cruel, very cruel, that such a moment should not have been made happy to her by his joy. The whisper made to her father should have been made to him—but that things had gone so untowardly with her. And then, in her present circumstances, she could not devote her letter to the one event. She must refer to the said subject of their separation. “Dear, dearest George, pray do not think of quarrelling with me,” she said twice over in her letter. The letter did get itself finished at last, and the groom was sent over with it on horse-back.

What answer would he make to her? Would he be very happy? Would he be happy enough to forgive her at once and come and stay with her at the Deanery? or would the importance of the moment make him more imperious than ever in commanding that she should go with him to Cross Hall. If he did command her now she thought that she must go.

Then she sat meditating what would be the circumstances of her life there—how absolutely she would be trodden upon; how powerless she would be to resist those Dorcas conclaves after her mutiny and subsequent submission! Though she could not quite guess, she could nearly guess what bad things had been said of her; and the ladies at Cross Hall were, as she understood, now in amity with him who had said them. They had believed evil of her, and of course, therefore, in going to Cross Hall, she would go to it as to a reformatory. But the Deanery would be to her a paradise if only her husband would but come to her there. It was not only that she was mistress of everything, including her own time, but that her father's infinite tenderness made all things soft and sweet to her. She hated to be scolded, and the slightest roughness of word or tone seemed to her to convey a rebuke. But he was never rough. She loved to be caressed by those who were dear and near and close to her, and his manner was always caressing. She often loved, if the truth is to be spoken, to be idle, and to spend hours with an unread book in her hand under the shade of the Deanery trees, and among the flowers of the Deanery garden. The Dean never questioned her as to those idle hours. But at Cross Hall not a half-hour would be allowed to pass without inquiry as to its purpose. At Cross Hall there would be no novels—except those of Miss Edgeworth, which were sickening to her. She might have all Mudie down to the Deanery if she chose to ask for it. At Cross Hall she would be driven out with the Dowager, Lady Susanna, and Lady Amelia, for two hours daily, and would have to get out of the carriage at every cottage she came

to. At the Deanery there was a pair of ponies, and it was her great delight to drive her father about the roads outside the city. She sometimes thought that a long sojourn at Cross Hall would kill her. Would he not be kind to her now, and loving, and would he not come and stay with her for one or two happy weeks in her father's house? If so, how dearly she would love him; how good she would be to him; how she would strive to gratify him in all his whims! Then she thought of Adelaide Houghton and the letter; and she thought also of those subsequent visits to Berkeley Square. But still she did not in the least believe that he cared for Adelaide Houghton. It was impossible that he should like a painted, unreal, helmeted creature, who smelt of oils, and was never unaffected for a moment. At any rate, she would never, never throw Adelaide Houghton in his teeth. If she had been imprudent, so had he; and she would teach him how small errors ought to be forgiven. But would he come to her, or would he only write? Surely he would come to her now when there was matter of such vital moment to be discussed between them! Surely there would be little directions given to her, which should be obeyed—oh, with such care!—if he would be good to her.

That pernicious groom must have ridden home along the road nearly as quick as the Dean's cob would carry him for the express purpose of saying that there was no message. When he had been about ten minutes in the Cross Hall kitchen, he was told that there was no message, and had trotted off with most unnecessary speed. Mary was with her father when word was brought to him, saying that there

was no message. "Oh, papa, he doesn't care!" she said.

"He will be sure to write," said the Dean, "and he would not allow himself to write in a hurry."

"But why doesn't he come."

"He ought to come."

"Oh, papa—if he doesn't care, I shall die."

"Men always care very much."

"But if he had made up his mind to quarrel with me forever, then he won't care. Why didn't he send his love?"

"He wouldn't do that by the groom."

"I'd send him mine by a chimney-sweep if there were nobody else." Then the door was opened, and in half a second she was in her husband's arms. "Oh, George, my darling, my own, I am so happy. I thought you would come. Oh, my dear!" Then the Dean crept out without a word, and the husband and the wife were together for hours.

"Do you think she is well?" said Lord George to the Dean in the course of the afternoon.

"Well! why shouldn't she be well?"

"In this condition I take it one never quite knows."

"I should say there isn't a young woman in England in better general health. I never knew her to be ill in my life since she had the measles."

"I thought she seemed flushed."

"No doubt—at seeing you."

"I suppose she ought to see the doctor."

"See a fiddlestick. If she's not fretted she won't want a doctor till the time comes, when the doctor will be with her whether she wants him or not. There's nothing so bad as coddling. Everybody knows that now. The great thing is to make her happy."

There came a cloud across Lord George's brow as this was said—a cloud which he could not control, though, as he had hurried across the park on horseback, he had made up his mind to be happy and good-humoured. He certainly had cared very much. He had spoken no word on the subject to anyone, but he had been very much disappointed when he had been married twelve months and no hope of an heir had as yet been vouchsafed to him. When his brother had alluded to the matter, he had rebuked even his brother. He had never ventured to ask a question even of his wife. But he had been himself aware of his own bitter disappointment. The reading of his wife's letter had given him a feeling of joy keener than any he had before felt. For a moment he had been almost triumphant. Of course he would go to her. That distasteful Popenjoy up in London was sick and ailing; and after all this might be the true Popenjoy who, in coming days, would re-establish the glory of the family. But, at any rate, she was his wife, and the bairn would be his bairn. He had been made a happy man, and had determined to enjoy to the full the first blush of his happiness. But when he was told that she was not to be fretted, that she was to be made especially happy, and was so told by her father, he did not quite clearly see his way for the future. Did this mean that he was to give up everything, that he was to confess tacitly that he had been wrong in even asking his wife to go with him to Cross Hall, and that he was to be reconciled in all things to the Dean? He was quite ready to take his wife back, to abstain from accusations against her, to let her be one of the family, but he was as eager as ever to repudiate the Dean. To the eyes

of his mother the Dean was now the most horrible of human beings, and her eldest born the dearest of sons. After all that he had endured he was again going to let her live at the old family house, and all those doubts about Popenjoy had, she thought, been fully satisfied. The Marquis, to her thinking, was now almost a model Marquis, and this dear son, this excellent head of the family, had been nearly murdered by the truculent Dean. Of course the Dean was spoken of at Cross Hall in very bitter terms, and of course those terms made impression on Lord George. In the first moments of his paternal anxiety he had been willing to encounter the Dean in order that he might see his wife; but he did not like to be told by the Dean that his wife ought to be made happy. "I don't know what there is to make her unhappy," he said, "if she will do her duty."

"That she has always done," said the Dean, "both before her marriage and since."

"I suppose she will come home now," said Lord George.

"I hardly know what home means. Your own home, I take it, is in Munster Court."

"My own home is at Manor Cross," said Lord George proudly.

"While that is the residence of Lord Brotherton it is absolutely impossible that she should go there. Would you take her to the house of a man who has scurrilously maligned her as he has done?"

"He is not there or likely to be there. Of course she would come to Cross Hall first."

"Do you think that would be wise? You were speaking just now with anxiety as to her condition."

"Of course I am anxious."

"You ought to be at any rate. Do you think that as she is now she should be subjected to the cold kindnesses of the ladies of your family?"

"What right have you to call their kindness cold?"

"Ask yourself. You hear what they say. I do not. You must know exactly what has been the effect in your mother's house of the scene between me and your brother at that hotel. I spurned him from me with violence because he had maligned your wife. I may expect you to forgive me."

"It was very unfortunate."

"I may feel sure that you as a man must exonerate me from blame in that matter, but I cannot expect your mother to see it in the same light. I ask you whether they do not regard her as wayward and unmanageable?"

He paused for a reply; and Lord George found himself obliged to say something. "She should come and show that she is not wayward or unmanageable."

"But she would be so to them. Without meaning it they would torment her, and she would be miserable. Do you not know that it would be so?" He almost seemed to yield. "If you wish her to be happy, come here for awhile. If you will stay here with us for a month, so that this stupid idea of a quarrel shall be wiped out of people's minds, I will undertake that she shall then go to Cross Hall. To Manor Cross she cannot go while the Marquis is its ostensible master."

Lord George was very far from being prepared to yield in this way. He had thought that his wife in her present condition would have been sure to obey him, and had been ventured to hope that the Dean

would make no further objection. "I don't think that this is the place for her," he said. "Wherever I am she should be with me."

"Then come here, and it will be all right," said the Dean.

"I don't think that I can do that."

"If you are anxious for her health you will." A few minutes ago the Dean had been very stout in his assurances that everything was well with his daughter; but he was by no means unwilling to take advantage of her interesting situation to forward his own views. "I certainly cannot say that she ought to go to Cross Hall at present. She would be wretched there. Ask yourself."

"Why should she be wretched?"

"Ask yourself. You had promised her that you would come here. Does not the very fact of your declining to keep that promise declare that you are dissatisfied with her conduct, and with mine?" Lord George was dissatisfied with his wife's conduct and with the Dean's, but at the present moment did not wish to say so. "I maintain that her conduct is altogether irreproachable; and, as for my own, I feel that I am entitled to your warmest thanks for what I have done. I must desire you to understand that we will neither of us submit to blame."

Nothing had been arranged when Lord George left the Deanery. The husband could not bring himself to say a harsh word to his wife. When she begged him to promise that he would come over to the Deanery, he shook his head. Then she shed a tear, but, as she did it, she kissed him, and he could not answer her love by any rough word. So he rode

back to Cross Hall, feeling that the difficulties of his position were almost insuperable.

On the next morning Mr. Price came to him. Mr. Price was the farmer who had formerly lived at Cross Hall, who had given his house up to the Dowager, and who had in consequence been told that he must quit the land at the expiration of his present term. "So, my lord, his lordship ain't going to stay very long after all," said Mr. Price.

"I don't quite know as yet," said Lord George.

"I have had Mr. Knox with me this morning, saying that I may go back to the Hall whenever I please. He took me so much by surprise, I didn't know what I was doing."

"My mother is still there, Mr. Price."

"In course she is, my lord. But Mr. Knox was saying that she is going to move back at once to the old house. It's very kind of his lordship, I'm sure, to let bygones be bygones." Lord George could only say that nothing was as yet settled, but that Mr. Price would be, of course, welcome to Cross Hall should the family go back to Manor Cross.

This took place about the 10th of June, and for a fortnight after that no change took place in any of their circumstances. Lady Alice Holdenough called upon Lady George, and, with her husband, dined at the Deanery; but Mary saw nothing else of any of the ladies of the family. No letter came from either of her sisters-in-law congratulating her as to her new hopes, and the Manor Cross carriage never stopped at the Dean's door. The sisters came to see Lady Alice, who live also in the Close, but they never even asked for Lady George. All this made the Dean very angry, so that he declared that his daughter

should under no circumstances be the first to give way. As she had not offended, she should never be driven to ask for pardon. During this time Lord George more than once saw his wife, but he had no further interview with the Dean.

CHAPTER XIV

LADY SARAH'S MISSION

TOWARDS the end of June the family at Cross Hall were in great perturbation. In the first place it had been now settled that they were to go back to the great house early in July. This might have been a source of unalloyed gratification. The old Marchioness had been made very unhappy by the change to Cross Hall, and had persisted in calling her new home a wretched farmhouse. Both Lady Susanna and Lady Amelia were quite alive to the advantages of the great mansion. Lord George had felt that his position in the county had been very much injured by recent events. This might partly have come from his residence in London; but had, no doubt, been chiefly owing to the loss of influence arising from the late migration. He was glad enough to go back again. But Lady Sarah was strongly opposed to the new movement. "I don't think that mamma should be made liable to be turned out again," she had said to her brother and sisters.

"But mamma is particularly anxious to go," Amelia had replied.

"You can't expect mamma to think correctly about Brotherton," said Lady Sarah. "He is vicious and fickle, and I do not like to feel that any of us should be in his power." But Lady Sarah, who had never been on good terms with her elder brother, was overruled, and everybody knew that in July the family was to return to Manor Cross.

Then there came tidings from London—unauthorised tidings, and, one may say, undignified tidings—but still tidings which were received with interest. Mrs. Toff had connections with Scumberg's, and heard through these connections that things at Scumberg's were not going on in a happy way. Mrs. Toff's correspondent declared that the Marquis had hardly been out of his bed since he had been knocked into the fire-place. Mrs. Toff, who had never loved the Dean and had never approved of that alliance, perhaps made the most of this. But the report, which was first made to the Dowager herself, caused very great uneasiness. The old lady said that she must go up to London herself to nurse her son. Then a letter was written by Lady Amelia to her brother asking for true information. This was the answer which Lady Amelia received:

"DEAR A.,—I'm pretty well, thank you. Don't trouble yourselves. Yours, B."

"I'm sure he's dying," said the Marchioness, "and he's too noble-hearted to speak of his sufferings." Nevertheless she felt that she did not dare to go up to Scumberg's just at present.

Then there came further tidings. Mrs. Toff was told that the Italian Marchioness had gone away, and had taken Popenjoy with her. There was not anything necessarily singular in this. When a gentleman is going abroad with his family, he and his family need not as a matter of course travel together. Lord Brotherton had declared his purpose of returning to Italy, and there could be no reason why his wife, with the nurses and the august Popenjoy, should not

go before him. It was just such an arrangement as such a man as Lord Brotherton would certainly make. But Mrs. Toff was sure that there was more in it than this. The Italian Marchioness had gone off very suddenly. There had been no grand packing up, but there had been some very angry words. And Popenjoy, when he was taken away, was supposed to be in a very poor condition of health. All this created renewed doubts in the mind of Lord George, or rather, perhaps, renewed hopes. Perhaps, after all, Popenjoy was not Popenjoy. And even if he were, it seemed that everyone concurred in thinking that the poor boy would die. Surely the Marquis would not have allowed a sick child to be carried away by an indiscreet Italian mother if he cared much for the sick child. But then Lord George had no real knowledge of these transactions. All this had come through Mrs. Toff, and he was hardly able to rely upon Mrs. Toff. Could he have communicated with the Dean, the Dean would soon have found out the truth. The Dean would have flown up to London and have known all about it in a couple of hours; but Lord George was not so active and clever as the Dean.

Then he wrote a letter to his brother, as follows:

"MY DEAR BROTHERTON,—We have heard through Mr. Knox that you wish us to move to Manor Cross at once, and we are preparing to do so. It is very kind of you to let us have the house, as Cross Hall is not all that my mother likes, and as there would hardly be room for us should my wife have children. I ought perhaps to have told you sooner that she is in the family way. We hear too that you are thinking of starting for Italy very soon, and that the Mar-

chioness and Popenjoy have already gone. Would it suit you to tell us something of your future plans? It is not that I want to be inquisitive, but that I should like to know with reference to your comfort and our own whether you think that you will be back at Manor Cross next year. Of course we should be very sorry to be in your way, but we should not like to give up Cross Hall till we know that it will not be wanted again.

"I hope you are getting better. I could of course come up to town at a moment's notice, if you wished to see me.

"Yours affectionately,

"GEORGE GERMAIN."

There was nothing in this letter which ought to have made any brother angry, but the answer which came to it certainly implied that the Marquis had received it with dudgeon.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,"—the Marquis said—"I can give you no guarantee that I shall not want Manor Cross again, and you ought not to expect it. If you and the family go there of course I must have rent for Cross Hall. I don't suppose I shall ever recover altogether from the injury that cursed brute did me.

"Yours, B.

"As to your coming family, of course I can say nothing. You won't expect me to be very full of joy. Nevertheless, for the honour of the family, I hope it is all right."

There was a brutality about this which for a time made the expectant father almost mad. He tore the

letter at once into fragments, so that he might be ready with an answer if asked to show it to his sisters. Lady Sarah had known of his writing, and did ask as to her brother's answer. "Of course he told me nothing," said Lord George. "He is not like any other brother that ever lived."

"May I see his letter?"

"I have destroyed it. It was not fit to be seen. He will not say whether he means to come back next year or not."

"I would not stir, if it were for me to determine," said Lady Sarah. "Nobody ever ought to live in another person's house as long as he has one of his own; and of all men certainly not in Brotherton's." Nevertheless, the migration went on, and early in July the Marchioness was once more in possession of her own room at Manor Cross, and Mrs. Toff was once again in the ascendant.

But what was to be done about Mary? Had Popenjoy been reported to enjoy robust health, and had Mary been as Mary was a month or two since, the Marchioness and Lady Susanna would have been contented that the present separation should have been permanent. They would at any rate have taken no steps to put an end to it which would not have implied abject submission on Mary's part. But now things were so altered! If this Popenjoy should die, and if Mary should have a son, Mary's position would be one which they could not afford to overlook. Though Mary should be living in absolute rebellion with that horrid Dean, still her Popenjoy would in course of time be the Popenjoy, and nothing that any Germain could do would stand in her way. Her Popenjoy would be Popenjoy as soon as the present Marquis

should die, and the family estates would all in due time be his! Her position had been becoming daily more honourable as these rumours were received. Everyone at Manor Cross, down to the boy in the kitchen, felt that her dignity had been immeasurably increased. Her child should now certainly be born at Manor Cross—though the Deanery would have been quite good enough had the present Popenjoy been robust. Something must be done. The Marchioness was clear that Mary should be taken into favour and made much of—even hinted that she should not be asked to make shirts and petticoats—if only she could be separated from the pestilential Dean. She spoke in private to her son, who declared that nothing would separate Mary from her father. “I don’t think I could entertain him after what he did to Brotherton,” said the Marchioness, bursting into tears.

There were great consultations at Manor Cross, in which the wisdom of Lady Sarah and Lady Susanna, and sometimes the good offices of Lady Alice Holdenough were taxed to the utmost. Lady Sarah had, since the beginning, of these latter troubles, been Mary’s best friend, though neither Mary nor the Dean had known of her good services. She had pretty nearly understood the full horror of the accusation brought by the Marquis, and had in her heart acquitted the Dean. Though she was hard she was very just. She believed no worse evil of Mary than that she had waltzed when her husband had wished her not to do so. To Lady Sarah all waltzing was an abomination, and disobedience to legitimate authority was abominable also. But then Mary had been taken to London, and had been thrown into temptation, and was very young. Lady Sarah knew that her own life was

colourless, and was contented; but she could understand that women differently situated should not like a colourless existence. She had seen Adelaide Houghton and her sister-in-law together, and had known that her brother's lot had fallen in much the better place, and, to her, any separation between those whom God had bound together was shocking and wicked. Lady Susanna was louder and less just. She did not believe that Mary had done anything to merit expulsion from the family; but she did think that her return to it should be accompanied by sackcloth and ashes. Mary had been pert to her, and she was not prone to forgive. Lady Alice had no opinion—could say nothing about it; but would be happy if, by her services, she could assuage matters.

"Does she ever talk of him?" Lady Susanna asked.

"Not to me; I don't think she dares. But whenever he goes there she is delighted to see him."

"He has not been for the last ten days," said Lady Sarah.

"I don't think he will ever go again—unless it be to fetch her," said Lady Susanna. "I don't see how he can keep on going there, when she won't do as he bids her. I never heard of such a thing! Why should she choose to live with her father when she is his wife? I can't understand it at all."

"There has been some provocation," said Lady Sarah.

"What provocation? I don't know of any. Just to please her fancy, George had to take a house in London, and live there against his own wishes."

"It was natural that she should go to the Deanery for a few days; and when she was there no one went to see her."

"Why did she not come here first?" said Lady Susanna. "Why did she take upon herself to say where she would go, instead of leaving it to her husband? Of course it was the Dean. How can any man be expected to endure that his wife should be governed by her father instead of by himself? I think George has been very forbearing."

"You have hardly told the whole story," said Lady Sarah. "Nor do I wish to tell it. Things were said which never should have been spoken. If you will have me, Alice, I will go to Brotherton for a day or two, and I will then go and see her."

And so it was arranged. No one in the house was told of the new plan, Lady Susanna having with difficulty been brought to promise silence. Lady Sarah's visit was of course announced, and that alone created great surprise, as Lady Sarah very rarely left home. The Marchioness had two or three floods of tears over it, and suggested that the carriage would be wanted for the entire day. This evil, however, was altogether escaped, as Lady Alice had a carriage of her own. "I'm sure I don't know who is to look after Mrs. Green," said the Marchioness. Mrs. Green was an old woman of ninety, who was supported by Germain charity, and was visited almost daily by Lady Sarah. But Lady Amelia promised that she would undertake Mrs. Green. "Of course I'm nobody," said the Marchioness. Mrs. Toff and all who knew the family were sure that the Marchioness would, in truth, enjoy her temporary freedom from her elder daughter's control.

Whatever might have been Lord George's suspicion, he said nothing about it. It had not been by agreement with him that the ladies of the family had ab-

stained from calling on his wife. He had expressed himself in very angry terms as to the Dean's misconduct in keeping her in Brotherton, and in his wrath had said more than once that he would never speak to the Dean again. He had not asked anyone to go there; but neither had he asked them not to do so. In certain of his moods he was indignant with his sisters for their treatment of his wife; and then again he would say to himself that it was impossible that they should go into the Dean's house after what the Dean had done. Now, when he heard that his eldest sister was going to the Close, he said not a word.

On the day of her arrival Lady Sarah knocked at the Deanery door alone. Up to this moment she had never put her foot in the house. Before the marriage she had known the Dean but slightly, and the visiting to be done by the family very rarely fell to her share. The streets of Brotherton were almost strange to her, so little was she given to leave the sphere of her own duties. In the hall, at the door of his study, she met the Dean. He was so surprised that he hardly knew how to greet her. "I am come to call upon Mary," said Lady Sarah, very brusquely.

"Better late than never," said the Dean, with a smile.

"I hope so," said Lady Sarah, very solemnly. "I hope that I am not doing that which ought not to be done. May I see her?"

"Of course you can see her. I daresay she will be delighted. Is your carriage here?"

"I am staying with my sister. Shall I go upstairs?"

Mary was in the garden, and Lady Sarah was alone for a few minutes in the drawing-room. Of course

she thought that this time was spent in conference by the father and daughter; but the Dean did not even see his child. He was anxious enough himself that the quarrel should be brought to an end, if only that end could be reached by some steps to be taken first by the other side. Mary, as she entered the room, was almost frightened, for Lady Sarah had certainly been the greatest of the bugbears when she was living at Manor Cross. "I am come to congratulate you," said Lady Sarah, putting her hand out straight before her.

Better late than never. Mary did not say so, as her father had done, but only thought it. "Thank you," she said, in a very low voice. "Has anyone else come?"

"No—no one else. I am with Alice, and as I have very much to say, I have come alone. Oh, Mary, dear Mary, is not this sad?" Mary was not at all disposed to yield, or to acknowledge that the sadness was, in any degree, her fault; but she remembered, at the moment, that Lady Sarah had never called her "dear Mary" before. "Don't you wish that you were back with George?"

"Of course I do. How can I wish anything else?"

"Why don't you go back to him?"

"Let him come here and fetch me, and be friends with papa. He promised that he would come and stay here. Is he well, Sarah?"

"Yes; he is well."

"Quite well? Give him my love—my best love. Tell him that in spite of everything I love him better than all the world."

"I am sure you do."

"Yes; of course I do. I could be so happy now if he would come to me."

"You can go to him. I will take you if you wish it."

"You don't understand," said Mary.

"What don't I understand?"

"About papa."

"Will he not let you go to your husband?"

"I suppose he would let me go; but if I were gone what would become of him?"

Lady Sarah did not, in truth, understand this. "When he gave you to be married," she said, "of course he knew that you must go away from him and live with your husband. A father does not expect a married daughter to stay in his own house."

"But he expects to be able to go to hers. He does not expect to be quarrelled with by everybody. If I were to go to Manor Cross, papa couldn't even come and see me."

"I think he could."

"You don't know papa if you fancy he would go into any house in which he was not welcome. Of course I know that you have all quarrelled with him. You think because he beat the Marquis up in London that he oughtn't ever to be spoken to again. But I love him for what he did more dearly than ever. He did it for my sake. He was defending me, and defending George. I have done nothing wrong. If it is only for George's sake, I will never admit that I have deserved to be treated in this way. None of you have come to see me before, since I came back from London, and now George doesn't come."

"We should all have been kind to you if you had come to us first."

"Yes; and then I should never have been allowed to be here at all. Let George come and stay here,

if it is only for two days, and be kind to papa, and then I will go with him to Manor Cross."

Lady Sarah was much surprised by the courage and persistence of the young wife's plea. The girl had become a woman, and was altered even in appearance. She certainly looked older, but then she was certainly much more beautiful than before. She was dressed, not richly, but with care, and looked like a woman of high family. Lady Sarah, who never changed either the colour or the material of her brown morning gown, liked to look at her, telling herself that should it ever be this woman's fate to be Marchioness of Brotherton, she would not in appearance disgrace the position. "I hope you can understand that we are very anxious about you," she said.

"I don't know."

"You might know, then. Your baby will be a Germain."

"Ah—yes—for that! You can't think I am happy without George. I am longing all day long, from morning to night, that he will come back to me. But after all that has happened, I must do what papa advises. If I were just to go to Manor Cross now, and allow myself to be carried there alone, you would all feel that I had been—forgiven. Isn't that true?"

"You would be very welcome."

"Susanna would forgive me, and your mother. And I should be like a girl who has been punished, and who is expected to remember ever so long that she has been naughty. I won't be forgiven, except by George—and he has nothing to forgive. You would all think me wicked if I were there, because I would not live in your ways."

"We should not think you wicked, Mary."

"Yes, you would. You thought me wicked before."

"Don't you believe we love you, Mary?"

She considered a moment before she made a reply, but then made it very clearly: "No," she said, "I don't think you do. George loves me. Oh, I hope he loves me."

"You may be quite sure of that. And I love you."

"Yes; just as you love all people, because the Bible tells you. That is not enough."

"I will love you like a sister, Mary, if you will come back to us."

She liked being asked. She was longing to be once more with her husband. She desired of all things to be able to talk to him of her coming hopes. There was something in the tone of Lady Sarah's voice, different from the tones of old, which had its effect. She would promise to go if only some slightest concession could be made, which should imply that neither she nor her father had given just cause of offence. And she did feel—she was always feeling—that her husband ought to remember that she had never brought counter-charges against him. She had told no one of Mrs. Houghton's letter. She was far too proud to give the slightest hint that she too had her grievance. But surely he should remember it. "I should like to go," she said.

"Then come back with me to-morrow." Lady Sarah had come only on this business, and if the business were completed there would be no legitimate reason for her prolonged sojourn at Brotherton.

"Would George come here for one night?"

"Surely, Mary, you would not drive a bargain with your husband?"

"But papa!"

"Your father can only be anxious for your happiness."

"Therefore I must be anxious for his. I can't say that I'll go without asking him."

"Then ask him and come in and see me at Alice's house this afternoon. And tell your father that I say you shall be received with all affection."

Mary made no promise that she would do even this as Lady Sarah took her leave; but she did at once consult her father. "Of course you can go if you like it, dearest."

"But you!"

"Never mind me. I am thinking only of you. They will be different to you now that they think you will be the mother of the heir."

"Would you take me, and stay there, for one night?"

"I don't think I could do that, dear. I do not consider that I have been exactly asked."

"But if they will ask you?"

"I cannot ask to be asked. To tell the truth, I am not at all anxious to be entertained at Manor Cross. They would always be thinking of that fireplace into which the Marquis fell."

The difficulty was very great, and Mary could not see her way through it. She did not go to Dr. Holdenough's house that afternoon, but wrote a very short note to Lady Sarah begging that George might come over and talk to her.

CHAPTER XV

"THAT YOUNG FELLOW IN THERE"

A DAY or two after this Lord George did call at the Deanery, but stayed there only for a minute or two, and on that occasion did not even speak of Mary's return to Manor Cross. He was considerably flurried, and showed his wife the letter which had caused his excitement. It was from his brother, and, like most of the Marquis's letters, was very short.

"I think you had better come up and see me. I'm not very well. B."

That was the entire letter, and he was now on his way to London.

"Do you think it is much, George?"

"He would not write like that unless he were really ill. He has never recovered from the results of that—accident."

Then it occurred to Mary that if the Marquis were to die, and Popenjoy were to die, she would at once be the Marchioness of Brotherton, and that people would say that her father had raised her to the title by—killing the late lord. And it would be so. There was something so horrible in this that she trembled as she thought of it. "Oh, George!"

"It is very—very sad."

"It was his fault; wasn't it? I would give all the

world that he were well; but it was his fault." Lord George was silent. "Oh, George, dear George, acknowledge that. Was it not so? Do you not think so? Could papa stand by and hear him call me such names as that? Could you have done so?"

"A man should not be killed for an angry word."

"Papa did not mean to kill him!"

"I can never be reconciled to the man who has taken the life of my brother."

"Do you love your brother better than me?"

"You and your father are not one."

"If this is to be said of him I will always be one with papa. He did it for my sake and for yours. If they send him to prison I will go with him. George, tell the truth about it."

"I always tell the truth," he said angrily.

"Did he not do right to protect his girl's name? I will never leave him now; never. If everybody is against him, I will never leave him."

No good was to be got from the interview. Whatever progress Lady Sarah may have made was altogether undone by the husband's sympathy for his injured brother. Mary declared to herself that if there must be two sides, if there must be a real quarrel, she could never be happy again, but that she certainly would not now desert her father. Then she was left alone. Ah, what would happen if the man were to die. Would any woman ever have risen to high rank in so miserable a manner! In her tumult of feelings she told her father everything, and was astonished by his equanimity. "It may be so," he said, "and if so, there will be considerable inconvenience."

"Inconvenience, papa!"

"There will be a coroner's inquest, and perhaps some kind of trial. But when the truth comes out no English jury will condemn me."

"Who will tell the truth, papa?"

The Dean knew it all, and was well aware that there would be no one to tell the truth on his behalf—no one to tell it in such guise that a jury would be entitled to accept the telling as evidence. A verdict of manslaughter, with punishment at the discretion of the judge, would be the probable result. But the Dean did not choose to add to his daughter's discomfort by explaining this. "The chances are that this wretched man is dying. No doubt his health is bad. How should the health of such a man be good? But had he been so hurt as to die from it, the doctor would have found something out long since. He may be dying, but he is not dying from what I did to him." The Dean was disturbed, but in his perturbation he remembered that if the man were to die there would be nothing but that little alien Popenjoy between his daughter and the title.

Lord George hurried up to town, and took a room for himself at an hotel in Jermyn Street. He would not go to Scumberg's, as he did not wish to mix his private life with that of his brother. That afternoon he went across, and was told that his brother would see him at three o'clock the next day. Then he interrogated Mrs. Walker as to his brother's condition. Mrs. Walker knew nothing about it except that the Marquis lay in bed during the most of his time, and that Dr. Pullbody was there every day. Now Dr. Pullbody was an eminent physician, and had the Marquis been dying from an injury in his back an eminent surgeon would have been required. Lord George

dined at his club on a mutton-chop and half a pint of sherry, and then found himself terribly dull. What could he do with himself? Whither could he betake himself? So he walked across Piccadilly and went to the old house in Berkeley Square.

He had certainly become very sick of the woman there. He had discussed the matter with himself and had found out that he did not care one straw for the woman. He had acknowledged to himself that she was a flirt, a mass of affectation, and a liar. And yet he went to her house. She would be soft to him and would flatter him, and the woman would trouble herself to do so. She would make him welcome, and in spite of his manifest neglect would try, for the hour, to make him comfortable.

He was shown up into the drawing-room, and there he found Jack de Baron, Guss Mildmay—and Mr. Houghton, fast asleep. The host was wakened up to bid him welcome, but was soon slumbering again. De Baron and Guss Mildmay had been playing bagatelle—or flirting in the back drawing-room, and after a word or two returned to their game. "Ill, is he?" said Mrs. Houghton, speaking of the Marquis, "I suppose he has never recovered from that terrible blow."

"I have not seen him yet, but I am told that Dr. Pullbody is with him."

"What a tragedy—if anything should happen! She has gone away; has she not?"

"I do not know. I did not ask."

"I think she has gone, and that she has taken the child with her; a poor puny thing. I made Houghton go there to inquire, and he saw the child. I hear from my father that we are to congratulate you."

"Things are too sad for congratulation."

"It is horrible, is it not? And Mary is with her father."

"Yes, she's at the Deanery."

"Is that right?—when all this is going on?"

"I don't think anything is right," he said gloomily.

"Has she—quarrelled with you, George?" At the sound of his Christian-name from the wife's lips he looked round at the sleeping husband. He was quite sure that Mr. Houghton would not like to hear his wife call him George. "He sleeps like a church," said Mrs. Houghton in a low voice. The two were sitting close together and Mr. Houghton's arm-chair was at a considerable distance. The occasional knocking of the balls, and the continued sound of voices was to be heard from the other room. "If you have separated from her I think you ought to tell me."

"I saw her to-day as I came through."

"But she does not go to Manor Cross?"

"She has been at the Deanery since she went down."

Of course this woman knew of the quarrel which had taken place in London. Of course she had been aware that Lady George had stayed behind in opposition to her husband's wishes. Of course she had learned every detail as to the Kappa-kappa. She took it for granted that Mary was in love with Jack de Baron, and thought it quite natural that she should be so. "She never understood you as I should have done, George," whispered the lady. Lord George again looked at the sleeping man, who grunted and moved. "He would hardly hear a pistol go off."

"Shouldn't I?" said the sleeping man, rubbing away the flies from his nose. Lord George wished himself back at his club.

"Come out into the balcony," said Mrs. Houghton. She led the way and he was obliged to follow her. There was a balcony to this house surrounded with full-grown shrubs, so that they who stood there could hardly be seen from the road below. "He never knows what anyone is saying." As she spoke she came close up to her visitor. "At any rate he has the merit of never troubling me or himself by any jealousies."

"I should be very sorry to give him cause," said Lord George.

"What's that you say?" Poor Lord George had simply been awkward, having intended no severity. "Have you given him no cause?"

"I meant that I should be sorry to trouble him."

"Ah—h! That is a different thing. If husbands would only be complaisant, how much nicer it would be for everybody." Then there was a pause. "You do love me, George?" There was a beautiful moon that was bright through the green foliage, and there was a smell of sweet exotics, and the garden of the square was mysteriously pretty as it lay below them in the moonlight. He stood silent, making no immediate answer to this appeal. He was in truth plucking up his courage for a great effort. "Say that you love me. After all that is passed you must love me." Still he was silent. "George, will you not speak?"

"Yes; I will speak."

"Well, sir!"

"I do not love you."

"What! But you are laughing at me. You have some scheme or some plot going on."

"I have nothing going on. It is better to say it. I love my wife."

"Psha! love her;—yes, as you would a doll or any pretty plaything. I loved her too till she took it into her stupid head to quarrel with me. I don't grudge her such love as that. She is a child."

It occurred to Lord George at the moment that his wife had certainly more than an infantine will of her own. "You don't know her," he said.

"And now, after all, you tell me to my face that you do not love me! Why have you sworn so often that you did?" He hadn't sworn it often. He had never sworn it at all since she had rejected him. He had been induced to admit a passion in the most meagre terms. "Do you own yourself to be false?" she asked.

"I am true to my wife."

"Your wife! One would think you were the curate of the parish. And is that to be all?"

"Yes, Mrs. Houghton; that had better be all."

"Then why did you come here? Why are you here now?" She had not expected such courage from him, and almost thought more of him now than she had ever thought before. "How dare you come to this house at all?"

"Perhaps I should not have come."

"And I am nothing to you?" she asked in her most plaintive accents. "After all those scenes at Manor Cross you can think of me with indifference?" There had been no scenes, and as she spoke he shook his head, intending to disclaim them. "Then go!" How was he to go? Was he to wake Mr. Houghton? Was he to disturb that other loving couple? Was he to say no word of farewell to her? "Oh, stay," she added, "and unsay it all—unsay it all and give no reason, and it shall be as though it were never said."

Then she seized him by the arm and looked passionately up into his eyes. Mr. Houghton moved restlessly in his chair and coughed aloud. "He'll be off again in half a moment," said Mrs. Houghton. Then he was silent, and she was silent, looking at him. And he heard a word or two come clearly from the back drawing-room. "You will, Jack; won't you, dear Jack."

The ridicule of the thing touched even him. "I think I had better go," he said.

"Then go!"

"Good-night, Mrs. Houghton."

"I will not say good-night. I will never speak to you again. You are not worth speaking to. You are false. I knew that men could be false, but not so false as you. Even that young fellow in there has some heart. He loves your—darling wife, and will be true to his love." She was a very devil in her wickedness. He started as though he had been stung, and rushed inside for his hat. "Hello, Germain, are you going?" said the man of the house, rousing himself for the moment.

"Yes, I am going. Where did I leave my hat?"

"You put it on the piano," said Mrs. Houghton in her mildest voice, standing at the window. Then he seized his hat and went off. "What a very stupid man he is," she said, as she entered the room.

"A very good sort of fellow," said Mr. Houghton.

"He's a gentleman all round," said Jack de Baron. Jack knew pretty well how the land lay, and could guess what had occurred.

"I am not so sure of that," said the lady. "If he were a gentleman as you say all round, he would not be so much afraid of his elder brother. He has come

up to town now merely because Brotherton sent to him, and when he went to Scumberg's the Marquis would not see him. He is just like his sisters—priggish, punctilious, and timid.”

“He has said something nasty to you,” remarked her husband, “or you would not speak of him like that.”

She had certainly said something very nasty to him. As he returned to his club he kept on repeating to himself her last words: “He loves your darling wife.” Into what a mass of trouble had he not fallen through the Dean's determination that his daughter should live in London! He was told on all sides that this man was in love with his wife, and he knew—he had so much evidence for knowing—that his wife liked the man. And now he was separated from his wife, and she could go whither her father chose to take her. For aught that he could do she might be made to live within the reach of this young scoundrel. No doubt his wife would come back if he would agree to take her back on her own terms. She would again belong to him if he would agree to take the Dean along with her. But taking the Dean would be to put himself into the Dean's leading-strings. The Dean was strong and imperious; and then the Dean was rich. But anything would be better than losing his wife. Faulty as he thought her to be, she was sweet as no one else was sweet. When alone with him she would seem to make every word of his a law. Her caresses were full of bliss to him. When he kissed her, her face would glow with pleasure. Her voice was music to him; her least touch was joy. There was a freshness about the very things which she wore which pervaded his senses. There was a homeliness

about her beauty which made her more lovely in her own room than when dressed for balls and parties. And yet he had heard it said that when dressed she was declared to be the most lovely woman that had come to London that season. And now she was about to become the mother of his child. He was thoroughly in love with his wife. And yet he was told that his wife was "Jack de Baron's darling!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE MARQUIS MAKES A PROPOSITION

THE next morning was very weary with him, as he had nothing to do till three o'clock. He was most anxious to know whether his sister-in-law had in truth left London, but he had no means of finding out. He could not ask questions on such a subject from Mrs. Walker and her satellites; and he felt that it would be difficult to ask even his brother. He was aware that his brother had behaved to him badly, and he had determined not to be over-courteous—unless, indeed, he should find his brother to be dangerously ill. But above all things he would avoid all semblance of inquisitiveness which might seem to have a reference to the condition of his own unborn child. He walked up and down St. James's Park thinking of all this, looking up once at the windows of the house which had brought so much trouble on him, that house of his which had hardly been his own, but not caring to knock at the door and enter it. He lunched in solitude at his club, and exactly at three o'clock presented himself at Scumberg's door. The Marquis's servant was soon with him, and then again he found himself alone in that dreary sitting-room. How wretched must his brother be, living there from day to day without a friend, or, as far as he was aware, without a companion!

He was there full twenty minutes, walking about the room in exasperated ill-humour, when at last the

door was opened and his brother was brought in between two men-servants. He was not actually carried, but was so supported as to appear unable to walk. Lord George asked some questions, but received no immediate answers. The Marquis was at the moment thinking too much of himself and of the men who were ministering to him to pay any attention to his brother. Then by degrees he was fixed in his place, and after what seemed to be interminable delay the two men went away. "Ugh!" ejaculated the Marquis.

"I am glad to see that you can at any rate leave your room," said Lord George.

"Then let me tell you that it takes deuced little to make you glad."

The beginning was not auspicious, and further progress in conversation seemed to be difficult. "They told me yesterday that Dr. Pullbody was attending you."

"He has this moment left me. I don't in the least believe in him. Your London doctors are such conceited asses that you can't speak to them. Because they can make more money than their brethren in other countries they think that they know everything, and that nobody else knows anything. It is just the same with the English in every branch of life. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the greatest priest going, because he has the greatest income, and the Lord Chancellor the greatest lawyer. All you fellows here are flunkies from top to bottom."

Lord George certainly had not come up to town merely to hear the great dignitaries of his country abused. But he was comforted somewhat as he reflected that a dying man would hardly turn his mind

to such an occupation. When a sick man criticises his doctor severely he is seldom in a very bad way. "Have you anybody else with you, Brotherton?"

"One is quite enough. But I had another. A fellow named Bolton was here, a baronet, I believe, who told me I ought to walk a mile in Hyde Park every day. When I told him I couldn't, he said I didn't know till I tried. I handed him a five-pound note, upon which he hauled out three pounds nineteen shillings change and walked off in a huff. I didn't send for him any more."

"Sir James Bolton has a great reputation."

"No doubt. I daresay he could cut off my leg if I asked him, and would then have handed out two pounds eighteen with the same indifference."

"I suppose your back is better?"

"No, it isn't,—not a bit. It gets worse and worse."

"What does Dr. Pullbody say?"

"Nothing that anybody can understand. By George! he takes my money freely enough. He tells me to eat beefsteak and drink port-wine. I'd sooner die at once. I told him so, or something a little stronger, I believe, and he almost jumped out of his shoes."

"He doesn't think there is any—danger?"

"He doesn't know anything about it. I wish I could have your father-in-law in a room by ourselves, with a couple of loaded revolvers. I'd make better work of it than he did."

"God forbid!"

"I daresay he won't give me the chance. He thinks he has done a plucky thing because he's as strong as a brewer's horse. I call that downright cowardice."

"It depends on how it began, Brotherton."

"Of course there had been words between us. Things always begin in that way."

"You must have driven him very hard."

"Are you going to take his part? Because, if so, there may as well be an end of it. I thought you had found him out and had separated yourself from him. You can't think that he is a gentleman?"

"He is a very liberal man."

"You mean to sell yourself, then, for the money that was made in his father's stables?"

"I have not sold myself at all. I haven't spoken to him for the last month."

"So I understood; therefore I sent for you. You are all back at Manor Cross now?"

"Yes; we are there."

"You wrote me a letter which I didn't think quite the right thing. But, however, I don't mind telling you that you can have the house if we can come to terms about it."

"What terms?"

"You can have the house and the park, and Cross Hall Farm too, if you'll pledge yourself that the Dean shall never enter your house again, and that you will never enter his house or speak to him. You shall do pretty nearly as you please at Manor Cross. In that event I shall live abroad, or here in London if I come to England. I think that's a fair offer, and I don't suppose that you yourself can be very fond of the man." Lord George sat perfectly silent while the Marquis waited for a reply. "After what has passed," continued he, "you can't suppose that I should choose that he should be entertained in my dining-room."

"You said the same about my wife before."

"Yes, I did; but a man may separate himself from his father-in-law when he can't very readily get rid of his wife. I never saw your wife."

"No;—and therefore cannot know what she is."

"I don't in the least want to know what she is. You and I, George, haven't been very lucky in our marriages."

"I have."

"Do you think so? You see I speak more frankly of myself. But I am not speaking of your wife. Your wife's father has been a blister to me ever since I came back to this country, and you must make up your mind whether you will take his part or mine. You know what he did, and what he induced you to do about Popenjoy. You know the reports that he has spread abroad. And you know what happened in this room. I expect you to throw him off altogether." Lord George had thrown the Dean off altogether. For reasons of his own he had come to the conclusion that the less he had to do with the Dean the better for himself; but he certainly could give no such pledge as this now demanded from him. "You won't make me this promise?" said the Marquis.

"No; I can't do that."

"Then you'll have to turn out of Manor Cross," said the Marquis, smiling.

"You do not mean that my mother must be turned out?"

"You and my mother, I suppose, will live together?"

"It does not follow. I will pay you rent for Cross Hall."

"You shall do no such thing. I will not let Cross Hall to any friend of the Dean's."

"You cannot turn your mother out immediately after telling her to go there!"

"It will be you who turn her out—not I. I have made you a very liberal offer," said the Marquis.

"I will have nothing to do with it," said Lord George. "In any house in which I act as master I will be the judge who shall be entertained and who not."

"The first guests you will ask, no doubt, will be the Dean of Brotherton and Captain de Baron." This was so unbearable that he at once made a rush at the door. "You'll find, my friend," said the Marquis, "that you'll have to get rid of the Dean and of the Dean's daughter as well." Then Lord George swore to himself as he left the room that he would never willingly be in his brother's company again.

He was rushing down the stairs, thinking about his wife, swearing to himself that all this was calumny, yet confessing to himself that there must have been terrible indiscretion to make the calumny so general, when he was met on the landing by Mrs. Walker in her best silk gown. "Please, my lord, might I take the liberty of asking for one word in my own room?" Lord George followed her and heard the one word. "Please, my lord, what are we to do with the Marquis?"

"Do with him!"

"About his going."

"Why should he go? He pays his bills, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, my lord; the Marquis pays his bills. There ain't no difficulty there, my lord. He's not quite himself."

"You mean in health?"

"Yes, my lord—in health. He don't give himself

—not a chance. He's out every night—in his brougham."

"I thought he was almost confined to his room?"

"Out every night, my lord, and that Courier with him on the box. When we gave him to understand that all manner of people couldn't be allowed to come here, we thought he'd go."

"The Marchioness has gone?"

"Oh, yes; and the poor little boy. It was bad enough when they was here, because things were so uncomfortable; but now—I wish something could be done, my lord." Lord George could only assure her that it was out of his power to do anything. He had no control over his brother, and did not even mean to come and see him again. "Dearie me!" said Mrs. Walker; "he's a very owdacious nobleman, I fear—is the Marquis."

All this was very bad. Lord George had learned, indeed, that the Marchioness and Popenjoy were gone, and was able to surmise that the parting had not been pleasant. His brother would probably soon follow them. But what was he to do himself! He could not, in consequence of such a warning, drag his mother and sisters back to Cross Hall, into which house Mr. Price, the farmer, had already moved himself. Nor could he very well leave his mother without explaining to her why he did so. Would it be right that he should take such a threat, uttered as that had been, as a notice to quit the house? He certainly would not live in his brother's house in opposition to his brother. But how was he to obey the orders of such a madman?

When he reached Brotherton he went at once to the Deanery, and was very glad to find his wife with-

out her father. He did not as yet wish to renew his friendly relations with the Dean, although he had refused to pledge himself to a quarrel. He still thought it to be his duty to take his wife away from her father, and to cause her to expiate those calumnies as to De Baron by some ascetic mode of life. She had been, since his last visit, in a state of nervous anxiety about the Marquis. "How is he, George?" she asked at once.

"I don't know how he is. I think he's mad."

"Mad!"

"He's leading a wretched life."

"But his back? Is he; is he——? I am afraid that papa is so unhappy about it! He won't say anything; but I know he is unhappy."

"You may tell your father from me that, as far as I can judge, his illness, if he is ill, has nothing to do with that."

"Oh, George, you have made me so happy."

"I wish I could be happy myself. I sometimes think that we had better go and live abroad."

"Abroad! You and I?"

"Yes. I suppose you would go with me?"

"Of course I would. But your mother?"

"I know there's all manner of trouble about it." He could not tell her of his brother's threat about the house, nor could he, after that threat, again bid her come to Manor Cross. As there was nothing more to be said he soon left her, and went to the house which he had again been forbidden to call his home.

But he told his sister everything. "I was afraid," she said, "that we should be wrong in coming here."

"It is no use going back to that now."

"Not the least. What ought we to do? It will break mamma's heart to be turned out again."

"I suppose we must ask Mr. Knox."

"It is unreasonable—monstrous! Mr. Price has got all his furniture back again into the Hall! It is terrible that any man should have so much power to do evil."

"I could not pledge myself about the Dean, Sarah."

"Certainly not. Nothing could be more wicked than his asking you. Of course, you will not tell mamma?"

"Not yet."

"I should take no notice of it whatever. If he means to turn us out of the house let him write to you, or send word by Mr. Knox. Out every night in London! What does he do?" Lord George shook his head. "I don't think he goes into society." Lord George could only shake his head again. There are so many kinds of society! "They said he was coming down to Mr. de Baron's in August."

"I heard that too. I don't know whether he'll come now. To see him brought in between two servants, you'd think that he couldn't move."

"But they told you he goes out every night?"

"I've no doubt that is true."

"I don't understand it at all," said Lady Sarah. "What is he to gain by pretending? And so they used to quarrel?"

"I tell you what the woman told me."

"I've no doubt it's true. And she has gone and taken Popenjoy? Did he say anything about Popenjoy?"

"Not a word," said Lord George.

"It's quite possible that the Dean may have been

right all through. What terrible mischief a man may do when he throws all idea of duty to the winds! If I were you, George, I should just go on as though I had not seen him at all."

That was the decision to which Lord George came, but in that he was soon shaken by a letter which he received from Mr. Knox. "I think if you were to go up to London and see your brother it would have a good effect," said Mr. Knox. In fact Mr. Knox's letter contained little more than a petition that Lord George would pay another visit to the Marquis. To this request, after consultation with his sister, he gave a positive refusal.

"MY DEAR MR. KNOX," he said, "I saw my brother less than a week ago, and the meeting was so unsatisfactory in every respect that I do not wish to repeat it. If he has anything to say to me as to the occupation of the house, he had better say it through you. I think, however, that my brother should be told that though I may be subject to his freaks, we cannot allow that my mother should be annoyed by them.

"Faithfully yours,

"GEORGE GERMAIN."

At the end of another week Mr. Knox came in person. The Marquis was willing that his mother should live at Manor Cross—and his sisters. But he had—so he said—been insulted by his brother, and must insist that Lord George should leave the house. If this order were not obeyed he should at once put the letting of the place into the hands of a house-agent. Then Mr. Knox went on to explain that he was to take back to the Marquis a definite reply. "When

people are dependent on me I choose that they shall be dependent," the Marquis had said.

Now, after a prolonged consultation to which Lady Susanna was admitted—so serious was the thing to be considered—it was found to be necessary to explain the matter to the Marchioness. Some step clearly must be taken. They must all go, or Lord George must go. Cross Hall was occupied, and Mr. Price was going to be married on the strength of his occupation. A lease had been executed to Mr. Price, which the Dowager herself had been called upon to sign. "Mamma will never be made to understand it," said Lady Susanna.

"No one can understand it," said Lord George. Lord George insisted that the ladies should continue to live at the large house, insinuating that, for himself, he would take some wretched residence in the most miserable corner of the globe which he could find.

The Marchioness was told, and really fell into a very bad way. She literally could not understand it, and aggravated matters by appearing to think that her younger son had been wanting in respect to his elder brother. And it was all that nasty Dean! And Mary must have behaved very badly, or Brother-ton would not have been so severe! "Mamma," said Lady Sarah, moved beyond her wont, "you ought not to think such things. George has been true to you all his life, and Mary has done nothing. It is all Brother-ton's fault. When did he ever behave well? If we are to be miserable, let us at any rate tell the truth about it." Then the Marchioness was put to bed and remained there for two days.

At last the Dean heard of it—first through Lady Alice, and then directly from Lady Sarah, who took

the news to the Deanery. Upon which he wrote the following letter to his son-in-law:

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I think your brother is not quite sane. I never thought that he was. Since I have had the pleasure of knowing you, especially since I have been connected with the family, he has been the cause of all the troubles that have befallen it. It is to be regretted that you should ever have moved back to Manor Cross, because his temper is so uncertain, and his motives so unchristian.

"I think I understand your position now, and will therefore not refer to it further than to say that, when not in London, I hope you will make the Deanery your home. You have your own house in town, and when here will be close to your mother and sisters. Anything I can do to make this a comfortable residence for you shall be done; and it will surely go for something with you, that a compliance with this request on your part will make another person the happiest woman in the world.

"In such an emergency as this am I not justified in saying that any little causes of displeasure that may have existed between you and me should now be forgotten? If you will think of them they really amount to nothing. For you I have the esteem of a friend and the affection of a father-in-law. A more devoted wife than my daughter does not live. Be a man and come to us, and let us make much of you.

"She knows I am writing, and sends her love; but I have not told her of the subject lest she should be wild with hope.

"Affectionately yours,

"HENRY LOVELACE."

The letter as he read it moved him to tears, but when he had finished the reading he told himself that it was impossible. There was one phrase in the letter which went sorely against the grain with him. The Dean told him to be a man. Did the Dean mean to imply that his conduct hitherto had been unmanly?

CHAPTER XVII

WOULDN'T YOU COME HERE—FOR A WEEK?

LORD GEORGE GERMAIN was very much troubled by the nobility of the Dean's offer. He felt sure that he could not accept it, but he felt at the same time that it would be almost as difficult to decline as to accept it. What else was he to do? where was he to go? how was he now to exercise authority over his wife? With what face could he call upon her to leave her father's house, when he had no house of his own to which to take her? There was, no doubt, the house in London, but that was her house, and peculiarly disagreeable to him. He might go abroad; but then what would become of his mother and sisters? He had trained himself to think that his presence was necessary to the very existence of the family; and his mother, though she ill-treated him, was quite of the same opinion. There would be a declaration of a break up made to all the world if he were to take himself far away from Manor Cross. In his difficulty of course he consulted Lady Sarah. What other counsellor was possible to him?

He was very fair with his sister, trying to explain everything to her—everything, with one or two exceptions. Of course he said nothing of the Houghton correspondence, nor did he give exactly a true account of the scene at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball;

but he succeeded in making Lady Sarah understand that though he accused his wife of nothing, he felt it to be incumbent on him to make her completely subject to his own authority. "No doubt she was wrong to waltz after what you told her," said Lady Sarah.

"Very wrong."

"But it was simply high spirits, I suppose."

"I don't think she understands how circumspect a young married woman ought to be," said the anxious husband. "She does not see how very much such high spirits may injure me. It enables an enemy to say such terrible things."

"Why should she have an enemy, George?" Then Lord George merely whispered his brother's name. "Why should Brotherton care to be her enemy?"

"Because of the Dean."

"She should not suffer for that. Of course, George, Mary and I are very different. She is young and I am old. She has been brought up to the pleasures of life, which I disregard, perhaps because they never came in my way. She is beautiful and soft—a woman such as men like to have near them. I never was such a one. I see the perils and pitfalls in her way; but I fancy that I am prone to exaggerate them, because I cannot sympathise with her yearnings. I often condemn her frivolity, but at the same time I condemn my own severity. I think she is true of heart—a loving woman. And she is at any rate your wife."

"You don't suppose that I wish to be rid of her?"

"Certainly not; but in keeping her close to you you must remember that she has a nature of her

own. She cannot feel as you do in all things any more than you feel as she does."

"One must give way to the other."

"Each must give way to the other if there is to be any happiness."

"You don't mean to say she ought to waltz, or dance stage-dances?"

"Let all that go for the present. She won't want to dance much for a time now, and when she has a baby in her arms she will be more apt to look at things with your eyes. If I were you I should accept the Dean's offer."

There was a certain amount of comfort in this, but there was more pain. His wife had defied him, and it was necessary to his dignity that she should be brought to submission before she was received into his full grace. And the Dean had encouraged her in those acts of defiance. They had, of course, come from him. She had been more her father's daughter than her husband's wife, and his pride could not endure that it should be so. Everything had gone against him. Hitherto he had been able to desire her to leave her father and to join him in his own home. Now he had no home to which to take her. He had endeavoured to do his duty—always excepting that disagreeable episode with Mrs. Houghton—and this was the fruit of it. He had tried to serve his brother, because his brother was Marquis of Brotherton, and his brother had used him like an enemy. His mother treated him with steady injustice. And now his sister told him that he was to yield to the Dean! He could not bring himself to yield to the Dean. At last he answered the Dean's letter as follows:

"MY DEAR DEAN,

"Your offer is very kind, but I do not think that I can accept it just at present. No doubt I am very much troubled by my brother's conduct. I have endeavoured to do my duty by him, and have met with but a poor return. What arrangements I shall ultimately make as to a home for myself and Mary, I cannot yet say. When anything is settled I shall, of course, let her know at once. It will always be, at any rate, one of my chief objects to make her comfortable, but I think this should be done under my roof, and not under yours. I hope to be able to see her in a day or two, when perhaps I shall have been able to settle upon something.

"Yours always affectionately,

"G. GERMAIN."

Then, upon reading this over and feeling that it was cold and almost heartless, he added a postscript. "I do feel your offer to be very generous, but I think you will understand the reasons which make it impossible that I should accept it." The Dean, as he read this, declared to himself that he knew the reasons very well. The reasons were not far to search. The man was pig-headed, foolish, and obstinately proud. So the Dean thought Lord George's presence in the house would not be a comfort to him. As far as he himself was concerned, Lord George had never been a pleasant companion to him. But he would have put up with worse than Lord George for the sake of his daughter.

On the very next day Lord George rode into Brotherton and went direct to the Deanery. Having left his horse at the inn he met the Dean in the Close,

coming out of a side door of the Cathedral Close to the Deanery gate. "I thought I would come in to see Mary," he said.

"Mary will be delighted."

"I did not believe that I should be able to come so soon when I wrote yesterday."

"I hope you are going to tell her that you have thought better of my little plan."

"Well, no; I don't think I can do that. I think she must come to me first, sir."

"But where!"

"I have not yet quite made up my mind. Of course there is a difficulty. My brother's conduct has been so very strange."

"Your brother is a madman, George."

"It is very easy to say so, but that does not make it any better. Though he be ever so mad, the house is his own. If he chooses to turn me out of it he can. I have told Mr. Knox that I would leave it within a month, for my mother's sake; but that, as I had gone there at his express instance, I could not move sooner. I think I was justified in that."

"I don't see why you should go at all."

"He would let the place."

"Or, if you do go, why you should not come here. But, of course, you know your own business best. How d'ye do, Mr. Groschut? I hope the Bishop is better this morning."

At this moment, just as they were entering the Deanery gate, the Bishop's chaplain had appeared. He had been very studious in spreading a report, which he had no doubt believed to be true, that all the Germain family, including Lord George, had

altogether repudiated the Dean, whose daughter, according to his story, was left upon her father's hands because she would not be received at Manor Cross. For Mr. Groschut had also heard of Jack de Baron, and had been cut to the soul by the wickedness of the Kappa-kappa. The general iniquity of Mary's life in London had been heavy on him. Brotherton, upon the whole, had pardoned the Dean for knocking the Marquis into the fireplace, having heard something of the true story with more or less correctness. But the chaplain's morals were sterner than those of Brotherton at large, and he was still of opinion that the Dean was a child of wrath, and poor Mary, therefore, a grandchild. Now, when he saw the Dean and his son-in-law apparently on friendly terms, the spirit of righteousness was vexed within him as he acknowledged this to be another sign that the Dean was escaping from that punishment which alone could be of service to him in this world. "His lordship is better this morning. I hope, my lord, I have the pleasure of seeing your lordship quite well." Then Mr. Groschut passed on.

"I am not quite sure," said the Dean, as he opened his own door, "whether any good is ever done by converting a Jew."

"But St. Paul was a converted Jew," said Lord George.

"Well—yes; in those early days Christians were only to be had by converting Jews or Pagans; and in those days they did actually become Christians. But the Groschuts are a mistake." Then he called to Mary, and in a few minutes she was in her husband's arms on the staircase. The Dean did not follow them, but went into his own room on the

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ground-floor; and Lord George did not see him again on that day.

Lord George remained with his wife nearly all the afternoon, going out with her into the town as she did some little shopping, and being seen with her in the market-place and Close. It must be owned of Mary that she was proud thus to be seen with him again, and that in buying her ribbons and gloves she referred to him, smiling as he said this, and pouting and pretending to differ as he said that, with greater urgency than she would have done had there been no breach between them. It had been terrible to her to think that there should be a quarrel—terrible to her that the world should think so. There was a gratification to her in feeling that even the shopkeepers should see her and her husband together. And when she met Canon Pountner and stopped a moment in the street while that worthy divine shook hands with her husband, that was an additional pleasure to her. The last few weeks had been heavy to her in spite of her father's affectionate care—heavy with a feeling of disgrace from which no well-minded young married woman can quite escape, when she is separated from her husband. She had endeavoured to do right. She thought she was doing right. But it was so sad! She was fond of pleasure, whereas he was little given to any amusement; but no pleasure could be pleasant to her now unless they were in some sort countenanced by him. She had never said such a word to a human being, but since that dancing of the Kappa-kappa she had sworn to herself a thousand times that she would never waltz again. And she hourly yearned for his company, having quite got over that first difficulty of her married life—that

doubt whether she could ever learn to love her husband. During much of this day she was actually happy, in spite of the great sorrow which still weighed so heavily upon them both.

And he liked it also in his way. He thought that he had never seen her looking more lovely. He was sure that she had never been more gracious to him. The touch of her hand was pleasant to his arm, and even he had sufficient spirit of fun about him to enjoy something of the mirth of her little grimaces. When he told her what her father had said about Mr. Groschut, even he laughed at her face of assumed disgust. "Papa doesn't hate him half as much as I do," she said. "Papa always does forgive at last, but I never can forgive Mr. Groschut."

"What has the poor man done?"

"He is so nasty! Don't you see that his face always shines. Any man with a shiny face ought to be hated." This was very well to give as a reason, but Mary entertained a very correct idea as to Mr. Groschut's opinion of herself.

Not a word had been said between the husband and wife as to the great question of residence till they had returned to the Deanery after their walk. Then Lord George found himself unable to conceal from her the offer which the Dean had made. "Oh, George—why don't you come?"

"It would not be—fitting."

"Fitting! Why not fitting? I think it would fit admirably. I know it would fit me." Then she leaned over him and took his hand and kissed it.

"It was very good of your father."

"I am sure he meant to be good."

"It was very good of your father," Lord George

repeated—"very good indeed; but it cannot be. A married woman should live in her husband's house, and not in her father's."

Mary gazed into his face with a perplexed look, not quite understanding the whole question, but still with a clear idea as to a part of it. All that might be very true, but if a husband didn't happen to have a house, then might not the wife's father's house be a convenience? They had indeed a house, provided no doubt with her money, but not the less now belonging to her husband, in which she would be very willing to live if he pleased it—the house in Munster Court. It was her husband that made objection to their own house. It was her husband who wished to live near Manor Cross, not having a roof of his own under which to do so. Were not these circumstances which ought to have made the Deanery a convenience to him? "Then what will you do?" she asked.

"I cannot say as yet." He had become again gloomy and black-browed.

"Wouldn't you come here—for a week?"

"I think not, my dear."

"Not when you know how happy it would make me to have you with me once again? I do so long to be telling you everything." Then she leant against him and embraced him, and implored him to grant her this favour. But he would not yield. He had told himself that the Dean had interfered between him and his wife, and that he must at any rate go through the ceremony of taking his wife away from her father. Let it be accorded to him that he had done that, and then perhaps he might visit the Deanery. As for her, she would have gone with him

anywhere now, having fully established her right to visit her father after leaving London.

There was nothing further settled, and very little more said, when Lord George left the Deanery and started back to Manor Cross. But with Mary there had been left a certain comfort. The shopkeepers and Dr. Pountner had seen her with her husband, and Mr. Groschut had met Lord George at the Deanery door.

CHAPTER XVIII

RUDHAM PARK

LORD GEORGE had undertaken to leave Manor Cross by the middle of August, but when the first week of that month had passed away he had not as yet made up his mind what he would do with himself. Mr. Knox had told him that should he remain with his mother the Marquis would not, as Mr. Knox thought, take further notice of the matter; but on such terms as these he could not consent to live in his brother's house.

On a certain day early in August Lord George had gone with a return ticket to a town but a few miles distant from Brotherton to sit on a committee for the distribution of coals and blankets, and in the afternoon got into a railway carriage on his way home. How great was his consternation when, on taking his seat, he found that his brother was seated alongside of him! There was one other old gentleman in the carriage, and the three passengers were all facing the engine. On two of the seats opposite were spread out the Marquis's travelling paraphernalia—his French novel, at which he had not looked, his dressing-bag, the box in which his luncheon had been packed, and his wine flask. There was a small basket of strawberries, should he be inclined to eat fruit, and an early peach out of a hothouse, with some flowers. "God Almighty, George—is that you?" he said. "Where the devil have you been?"

"I've been to Grumby."

"And what are the people doing at Grumby?"

"Much the same as usual. It was the coal and blanket account."

"Oh, the coal and blanket account! I hope you liked it." Then he folded himself afresh in his cloaks, ate a strawberry, and looked as though he had taken sufficient notice of his brother.

But the matter was very important to Lord George. Nothing ever seemed to be of importance to the Marquis. It might be very probable that the Marquis, with half-a-dozen servants behind him, should drive up to the door at Manor Cross without having given an hour's notice of his intention. It seemed to be too probable to Lord George that such would be the case now. For what other reason could he be there? And then there was his back. Though they had quarreled he was bound to ask after his brother's back. When last they two had met, the Marquis had been almost carried into the room by two men. "I hope you find yourself better than when I last saw you," he said, after a pause of five minutes.

"I have not much to boast of. I can just travel, and that's all."

"And how is—Popenjoy?"

"Upon my word I can't tell you. He has never seemed to be very well when I've seen him."

"I hope the accounts have been better," said Lord George, with solicitude.

"Coal and blanket accounts?" suggested the Marquis. And then the conversation was again brought to an end for five minutes.

But it was essential that Lord George should know whither his brother was going. If to Manor Cross,

then, thought Lord George, he himself would stay at an inn at Brotherton. Anything, even the Deanery, would be better than sitting at table with his brother, with the insults of their last interview unappeased. At the end of five minutes he plucked up his courage, and asked his brother another question. "Are you going to the house, Brotherton?"

"The house! What house? I'm going to a house, I hope."

"I mean to Manor Cross."

"Not if I know it. There is no house in this part of the country in which I should be less likely to show my face." Then there was not another word said till they reached the Brotherton station, and there the Marquis, who was sitting next the door, requested his brother to leave the carriage first. "Get out, will you?" he said. "I must wait for somebody to come and take these things. And don't trample on me any more than you can help." This last request had apparently been made, because Lord George was unable to step across him without treading on the cloak.

"I will say good-bye, then," said Lord George, turning round on the platform for a moment.

"Ta, ta," said the Marquis, as he gave his attention to the servant who was collecting the fruit, and the flowers, and the flask. Lord George then passed on out of the station, and saw no more of his brother.

"Of course he's going to Rudham," said Lady Susanna, when she heard the story. Rudham Park was the seat of Mr. de Baron, Mrs. Houghton's father, and tidings had reached Manor Cross long since that the Marquis had promised to go there in the autumn. No doubt other circumstances had seemed to make

it improbable that the promise should be kept. Popenjoy had gone away ill—as many said, in a dying condition. Then the Marquis had been thrown into a fireplace, and report had said that his back had been all but broken. It had certainly been generally thought the Marquis would go nowhere after that affair in the fireplace, till he returned to Italy. But Lady Susanna was, in truth, right. His lordship was on his way to Rudham Park.

Mr. de Baron, of Rudham Park, though a much older man than the Marquis, had been the Marquis's friend, when the Marquis came of age, being then the Popenjoy of those days, and a fast young man known as such about England. Mr. de Baron, who was a neighbour, had taken him by the hand. Mr. de Baron had put him in the way of buying and training race-horses, and had, perhaps, been godfather to his pleasures in other matters. Rudham Park had never been loved at Manor Cross by others than the present lord, and for that reason, perhaps, was dearer to him. He had promised to go there soon after his return to England, and was now keeping his promise. On his arrival there the Marquis found a houseful of people. There were Mr. and Mrs. Houghton, and Lord Gibley, who, having engaged himself rashly to Miss Patmore Green, had rushed out of town sooner than usual that he might devise in retirement some means of escaping from his position; and, to Lord Gibley's horror, there was Mrs. Montacute Jones, who, he well knew, would, if possible, keep him to the collar. There was also Aunt Julia, with her niece Guss, and of course there was Jack de Baron. The Marquis was rather glad to meet Jack, as to whom he had some hope that he

might be induced to run away with Lord George's wife, and thus free the Germain family from that little annoyance. But the guest who surprised the Marquis the most was the Baroness Banmann, whose name and occupation he did not at first learn very distinctly.

"All right again, my lord?" asked Mr. de Baron, as he welcomed his noble guest.

"Upon my word I'm not, then. That coal-heaving brute of a parson pretty nearly did for me."

"A terrible outrage it was."

"Outrage! I should think so. There's nothing so bad as a clerical bully. What was I to do with him? Of course he was the stronger. I don't pretend to be a Samson. One doesn't expect that kind of thing among gentlemen?"

"No, indeed."

"I wish I could have him somewhere with a pair of foils with the buttons off. His black coat shouldn't save his intestines. I don't know what the devil the country is come to, when such a fellow as that is admitted into people's houses."

"You won't meet him here, Brotherton."

"I wish I might. I think I'd manage to be even with him before he got away. Who's the Baroness you have got?"

"I don't know much about her. My daughter Adelaide—Mrs. Houghton, you know—has brought her down. There's been some row among the women up in London. This is one of the prophets, and I think she is brought here to spite Lady Selina Protest, who has taken an American prophetess by the hand. She won't annoy you, I hope?"

"Not in the least. I like strange wild beasts."

And so that is Captain de Baron, of whom I have heard?"

"That is my nephew, Jack. He has a small fortune of his own, which he is spending fast. As long as it lasts one has to be civil to him."

"I am delighted to meet him. Don't they say he is sweet on a certain young woman?"

"A dozen, I believe."

"Ah—but one I know something of."

"I don't think there is anything in that, Brother-ton—I don't, indeed, or I shouldn't have brought him here."

"I do, though. And, as to not bringing him here, why shouldn't you bring him? If she don't go off with him, she will with somebody else, and the sooner the better, according to my ideas." This was a matter upon which Mr. de Baron was not prepared to dilate, and he therefore changed the subject.

"My dear Lord Giblet, it is such a pleasure to me to meet you here," old Mrs. Jones said to that young nobleman. "When I was told you were to be at Rudham, it determined me at once." This was true, for there was no more persistent friend living than old Mrs. Jones, though it might be doubted whether, on this occasion, Lord Giblet was the friend on whose behalf she had come to Rudham.

"It's very nice, isn't it?" said Lord Giblet, gasping.

"Hadh't we a pleasant time of it with our little parties in Grosvenor Place?"

"Never liked anything so much in my life; only I don't think that fellow Jack de Baron dances so much better than other people, after all?"

"Who says he does? But I'll tell you who dances

well. Olivia Green was charming in the Kappa-kappa. Don't you think so?"

"Uncommon pretty." Lord Giblet was quite willing to be understood to admire Miss Patmore Green, though he thought it hard that people should hurry him on into matrimony.

"The most graceful girl I ever saw in my life, certainly," said Mrs. Montacute Jones. "His Royal Highness, when he heard of the engagement, said that you were the happiest man in London."

Lord Giblet could not satisfy himself by declaring that H. R. H. was an old fool, as poor Mary had done on a certain occasion—but at the present moment he did not feel at all loyal to the Royal Family generally. Nor did he, in the least, know how to answer Mrs. Jones. She had declared the engagement as a fact, and he did not quite dare to deny it altogether. He had, in an unguarded moment, when the weather had been warm and the champagne cool, said a word with so definite a meaning that the lady had been justified in not allowing it to pass by as idle. The lady had accepted him, and on the following morning he had found the lock of hair and the little stud which she had given him, and had feverish reminiscences of a kiss. But surely he was not a bird to be caught with so small a grain of salt as that! He had not as yet seen Mr. Patmore Green, having escaped from London at once. He had answered a note from Olivia, which had called him "Dearest Charlie" by a counter note, in which he had called her "Dear O.," and had signed himself "Ever yours, G.," promising to meet her up the river. But of course he had not gone up the river! The rest of the season might certainly be done without assistance

from him. He knew that he would be pursued. He could not hope not to be pursued. But he had not thought that Mrs. Montacute Jones would be so quick upon him. It was impossible that H. R. H. should have heard of any engagement as yet. What a nasty, false, wicked old woman she was! He blushed, red as a rose, and stammered out that he "didn't know." He was only four-and-twenty, and perhaps he didn't know.

"I never saw a girl so much in love in my life," continued Mrs. Jones. "I know her just as well as if she were my own, and she speaks to me as she doesn't dare to speak to you at present. Though she is barely twenty-one, she has been very much sought after already, and the very day she marries has ten thousand pounds in her own hands. That isn't a large fortune, and of course you don't want a large fortune; but it isn't every girl can pay such a sum straight into her husband's bank the moment she marries!"

"No, indeed," said Lord Gibley. He was still determined that nothing should induce him to marry Miss Green; but nevertheless, behind that resolution there was a feeling that, if anything should bring about the marriage, such a sum of ready money would be a consolation. His father, the Earl of Jopling, though a very rich man, kept him a little close, and ten thousand pounds would be nice. But then perhaps the old woman was lying.

"Now I'll tell you what I want you to do," said Mrs. Jones, who was resolved that if the game were not landed it should not be her fault. "We go from here to Killancodlem next week. You must come and join us."

"I've got to go and grouse at Stranbracket's," said Lord Giblet, happy in an excuse.

"It couldn't be better. They're both within eight miles of Dunkeld." If so, then ropes shouldn't take him to Stranbracket's that year. "Of course you'll come. It's the prettiest place in Perth, though I say it, as oughtn't. And she will be there. If you really want to know a girl, see her in a country house."

But he didn't really want to know the girl. She was very nice, and he liked her uncommonly, but he didn't want to know anything more about her. By George! Was a man to be persecuted this way, because he had once spooned a girl a little too fiercely? As he thought of this he almost plucked up his courage sufficiently to tell Mrs. Jones that she had better pick out some other young man for deportation to Killanodlem. "I should like it ever so," he said.

"I'll take care that you shall like it, Lord Giblet. I think I may boast that when I put my wits to work I can make my house agreeable. I'm very fond of young people, but there's no one I love as I do Olivia Green. There isn't a young woman in London has so much to be loved for. Of course you'll come. What day shall we name?"

"I don't think I could name a day."

"Let us say the 27th. That will give you nearly a week at the grouse first. Be with us to dinner on the 27th."

"Well—perhaps I will."

"Of course you will. I shall write to Olivia to-night, and I daresay you will do so also."

Lord Giblet, when he was let to go, tried to suck consolation from the ten thousand pounds. Though

he was still resolved, he almost believed that Mrs. Montacute Jones would conquer him. Write to Olivia to-night! Lying, false old woman! Of course she knew that there was hardly a lady in England to whom it was so little likely that he should write as to Miss Patmore Green. How could an old woman, with one foot in the grave, be so wicked? And why should she persecute him? What had he done to her? Olivia Green was not her daughter, or even her niece. "So you are going to Killancodlem?" Mrs. Houghton said to him that afternoon.

"She has asked me," said Lord Giblet.

"It's simply the most comfortable house in all Scotland, and they tell me some of the best deer-stalking. Everybody likes to get to Killancodlem. Don't you love old Mrs. Jones?"

"Charming old woman!"

"And such a friend! If she once takes to you she never drops you."

"Sticks like wax, I should say."

"Quite like wax, Lord Giblet. And when she makes up her mind to do a thing she always does it. It's quite wonderful; but she never gets beaten."

"Doesn't she now?"

"Never. She hasn't asked us to Killancodlem yet, but I hope she will." A manly resolution now roused itself in Lord Giblet's bosom that he would be the person to beat Mrs. Jones at last. But yet he doubted. If he were asked the question by anyone having a right to ask he could not deny that he had proposed to marry Miss Patmore Green.

"So you've come down to singe your wings again?" said Mrs. Houghton to her cousin Jack.

"My wings have been burned clean away already,

and, in point of fact, I am not half so near to Lady George here as I was in London."

"It's only ten miles."

"If it were five it would be the same. We're not in the same set down in Barsetshire."

"I suppose you can have yourself taken to Brotherton, if you please?"

"Yes—I can call at the Deanery; but I shouldn't know what to say when I got there."

"You've become very mealy-mouthed of a sudden."

"Not with you, my sweet cousin. With you I can discuss the devil and all his works as freely as ever; but with Lady George, at her father's house, I think I should be dumb. In truth, I haven't got anything to say to her."

"I thought you had."

"I know you think so; but I haven't. It is quite on the card that I may ride over some day, as I would to see my sister."

"Your sister!"

"And that I shall make eager inquiries after her horse, her pet dog, and her husband."

"You will be wrong there, for she has quarrelled with her husband altogether."

"I hope not."

"They are not living together, and never even see each other. He's at Manor Cross, and she's at the Deanery. She's a divinity to you, but Lord George seems to have found her so human that he's tired of her already."

"Then it must be his own fault."

"Or perhaps yours, Jack. You don't suppose a husband goes through a little scene like that at Mrs. Jones's without feeling it?"

"He made an ass of himself, and a man generally feels that afterwards," said Jack.

"The truth is they're tired of each other. There isn't very much in Lord George, but there is something. He is slow, but there is a certain manliness at the bottom of it. But there isn't very much in her!"

"That's all you know about it."

"Perhaps you may know her better, but I never could find anything. You confess to being in love, and of course a lover is blind. But where you are most wrong is in supposing that she is something so much better than other women. She flirted with you so frankly that she made you think her a goddess."

"She never flirted with me in her life."

"Exactly—because flirting is bad, and she being a goddess cannot do evil. I wish you'd take her in your arms and kiss her."

"I shouldn't dare."

"No—and therefore you're not in the way to learn that she's a woman just the same as other women. Will Mrs. Jones succeed with that stupid young man?"

"With Giblet? I hope so. It can't make any difference to him whether it's this one or another, and I do like Mrs. Jones."

"Would they let me have just a little lecture in the dining-room?" asked the Baroness of her friend, Aunt Ju. There had been certain changes among the Disabilities up in London. Lady Selina Protest had taken Dr. Olivia Q. Fleabody altogether by the hand, and had appointed her chief professor at the Institute, perhaps without sufficient authority.

Aunt Ju had been cast into the shade, and had

consequently been driven to throw herself into the arms of the Baroness. At present there was a terrible feud in which Aunt Ju was being much worsted. For the Baroness was an Old Man of the Sea, and, having got herself on to Aunt Ju's shoulders, could not be shaken off. In the meantime Dr. Fleabody was filling the Institute, reaping golden harvest, and breaking the heart of the poor Baroness, who had fallen into much trouble and was now altogether penniless.

"I'm afraid not," said Aunt Ju. "I'm afraid we can't do that."

"Perhaps de Marquis would like it?"

"I hardly think so."

"He did say a word to me, and I tink he would like it. He vant to understand."

"My dear Baroness, I'm sure the Marquis of Brotherton does not care about it in the least. He is quite in the dark on such subjects—quite benighted. What was the use, thought the Baroness, of bringing her down to a house in which people were so benighted that she could not be allowed to open her mouth or carry on her profession? Had she not been enticed over from her own country in order that she might open her mouth, and preach her doctrine, and become a great and a wealthy woman? There was a fraud in this enforced silence which cut her to the very quick. "I tink I shall try," she said, separating herself in her wrath from her friend.

CHAPTER XIX

GUSS MILDMAY'S SUCCESS

THE treatment which the Marquis received at Rudham did not certainly imply any feeling that he had disgraced himself by what he had done either at Manor Cross or up in London. Perhaps the ladies there did not know as much of his habits as did Mrs. Walker at Scumberg's. Perhaps the feeling was strong that Popenjoy was Popenjoy, and that therefore the Marquis had been injured. If a child be born in British purple—true purple, though it may have been stained by circumstances—that purple is very sacred. Perhaps it was thought that under no circumstances should a Marquis be knocked into the fireplace by a clergyman. There was still a good deal of mystery, both as to Popenjoy and as to the fireplace, and the Marquis was the hero of these mysteries. Everyone at Rudham was anxious to sit by his side and to be allowed to talk to him. When he abused the Dean, which he did freely, those who heard him assented to all he said. The Baroness Banmann held up her hands in horror when she heard the tale, and declared the Church to be one grand *bêtise*. Mrs. Houghton, who was very attentive to the Marquis, and whom the Marquis liked, was pertinacious in her inquiries after Popenjoy, and cruelly sarcastic upon the Dean. "Think what was his bringing up," said Mrs. Houghton.

"In a stable," said the Marquis.

"I always felt it to be a great pity that Lord George should have made that match—not but what she is a good creature in her way."

"She is no better than she should be," said the Marquis. Then Mrs. Houghton found herself able to insinuate that perhaps, after all, Mary was not a good creature, even in her own way. But the Marquis's chief friend was Jack de Baron. He talked to Jack about races and billiards, and women; but though he did not refrain from abusing the Dean, he said no word to Jack against Mary. If it might be that the Dean should receive his punishment in that direction he would do nothing to prevent it. "They tell me she's a beautiful woman. I have never seen her myself," said the Marquis.

"She is very beautiful," said Jack.

"Why the devil she should have married George, I can't think. She doesn't care for him the least."

"Don't you think she does?"

"I am sure she don't. I suppose her pestilent father thought it was the nearest way to a coronet. I don't know why men should marry at all. They always get into trouble by it."

"Somebody must have children," suggested Jack.

"I don't see the necessity. It's nothing to me what comes of the property after I'm gone. What is it, madam?" They were sitting out on the lawn after lunch and Jack and the Marquis were both smoking. As they were talking the Baroness had come up to them and made her little proposition. "What! a lecture! If Mr. de Baron pleases, of course. I never listen to lectures myself—except from my wife."

"Ah! dat is vat I vant to prevent."

"I have prevented it already by sending her to

Italy. Oh, rights of women! Very interesting; but I don't think I'm well enough myself. Here is Captain de Baron, a young man as strong as a horse, and very fond of women. He'll sit it out."

"I beg your pardon; what is it?" Then the Baroness, with rapid words, told her own sad story. She had been deluded, defrauded, and ruined by those wicked females, Lady Selina Protest and Dr. Fleabody. The Marquis was a nobleman whom all England, nay, all Europe, delighted to honour. Could not the Marquis do something for her? She was rapid and eloquent, but not always intelligible. "What is it she wants?" asked the Marquis, turning to Jack.

"Pecuniary assistance, I think, my lord."

"Yah, yah. I have been bamboozled of everything, my Lord Marquis."

"Oh, my G—, De Baron shouldn't have let me in for this. Would you mind telling my fellow to give her a ten-pound note?" Jack said that he would not mind; and the Baroness stuck to him pertinaciously, not leaving his side a moment till she had got the money. Of course there was no lecture. The Baroness was made to understand that visitors at a country house in England could not be made to endure such an infliction; but she succeeded in levying a contribution from Mrs. Montacute Jones, and there were rumours afloat that she got a sovereign out of Mr. Houghton.

Lord Giblest had come with the intention of staying a week, but, the day after the attack made upon him by Mrs. Montacute Jones, news arrived which made it absolutely necessary that he should go to Castle Gosling at once. "We shall be sorry to miss

you," said Mrs. Montacute Jones, whom he tried to avoid in making his general adieux, but who was a great deal too clever not to catch him.

"My father wants to see me about the property, you know."

"Of course. There must be a great deal to do between you." Everybody who knew the affairs of the family was aware that the old Earl never thought of consulting his son; and Mrs. Montacute Jones knew everything.

"Ever so much; therefore I must be off at once. My fellow is packing my things now; and there is a train in an hour's time."

"Did you hear from Olivia this morning?"

"Not to-day."

"I hope you are as proud as you ought to be of having such a sweet girl belonging to you." Nasty old woman! What right had she to say these things? "I told Mrs. Green that you were here, and that you were coming to meet Olivia on the 27th."

"What did she say?"

"She thinks you ought to see Mr. Green as you go through London. He is the easiest, most good-natured man in the world. Don't you think you might as well speak to him?" Who was Mrs. Montacute Jones that she should talk to him in this way? "I would send a telegram, if I were you, to say I would be there to-night."

"Perhaps it would be best," said Lord Giblet.

"Oh, certainly. Now mind, we expect you to dinner on the 27th. Is there anybody else you'd specially like me to ask?"

"Nobody in particular, thank ye."

"Isn't Jack de Baron a friend of yours?"

"Yes—I like Jack pretty well. He thinks a great deal of himself, you know."

"All the young men do that now. At any rate I'll ask Jack to meet you." Unfortunately for Lord Giblet, Jack appeared in sight at this very moment. "Captain de Baron, Lord Giblet has been good enough to say that he'll come to my little place at Killancodlem on the 27th. Can you meet him there?"

"Delighted, Mrs. Jones. Who ever refuses to go to Killancodlem?"

"It isn't Killancodlem and its little comforts that are bringing his lordship. We shall be delighted to see him; but he is coming to see—— Well I suppose it's no secret now, Lord Giblet?" Jack bowed his congratulations, and Lord Giblet again blushed as red as a rose.

Detestable old woman! Whither should he take himself? In what farthest part of the Rocky Mountains should he spend the coming autumn? If neither Mr. nor Mrs. Green called upon him for an explanation, what possible right could this abominable old harpy have to prey upon him? Just at the end of a cotillon he had said one word! He knew men who had done ten times as much and had not been as severely handled. And he was sure that Jack de Baron had had something to do with it. Jack had been hand in hand with Mrs. Jones at the making up of the Kappa-kappa. But as he went to the station he reflected that Olivia Green was a very nice girl. If those ten thousand pounds were true they would be a great comfort to him. His mother was always bothering him to get married. If he could bring himself to accept this as his fate, he would be saved a deal of trouble. Spooning at Killancodlem,

after all, would not be bad fun. He almost told himself that he would marry Miss Green. were it not that he was determined not to be dictated to by that old harriidan.

Many people came and went at Rudham Park, but among those who did not go was Guss Mildmay. Aunt Julia, who had become thoroughly ashamed of the Baroness, had wished to take her departure on the third day; but Guss had managed to stop her. "What's the good of coming to a house for three days? You said you meant to stay a week. They know what she is now, and the harm's done. It was your own fault for bringing her. I don't see why I'm to be thrown over because you've made a mistake about a vulgar old woman. We've nowhere to go to till November, and now we are out of town for heaven's sake let us stay as long as we can." In this way Guss carried her point, watching her opportunity for a little conversation with her former lover.

At last the opportunity came. It was not that Jack avoided her, but that it was necessary that she should be sure of having half an hour alone with him. At last she made the opportunity, calling upon him to walk with her one Sunday morning, when all other folk were in church, or perhaps in bed. "No, I won't go to church," she had said to Aunt Ju. "What is the use of your asking 'why not?' I won't go. They are quite accustomed at Rudham to people not going to church. I always go in a stiff house, but I won't go here. When you are at Rome you should do as the Romans do. I don't suppose there'll be half a dozen there out of the whole party." Aunt Ju went to church as a matter

of course, and the opportunity of walking in the grounds with Jack was accomplished. "Are you going to Killancodlem?" she said.

"I suppose I shall, for a few days."

"Have you got anything to say before you go?"

"Nothing particular."

"Of course I don't mean to me."

"I've nothing particular to say to anybody just at present. Since I've been here that wretched old Marquis has been my chief fate. It's quite a pleasure to hear him abuse the Dean."

"And the Dean's daughter?"

"He has not much good to say about her either."

"I'm not surprised at that, Jack. And what do you say to him about the Dean's daughter?"

"Very little, Guss."

"And what are you going to say to me about her?"

"Nothing at all, Guss."

"She's all the world to you, I suppose?"

"What's the use of your saying that? In one sense she's nothing to me. My belief is that the only man she'll ever care a pin about is her husband. At any rate, she does not care a straw for me."

"Nor you for her?"

"Well—yes, I do. She's one of my pet friends. There's nobody I like being with better."

"And if she were not married?"

"God knows what might have happened. I might have asked her to have me, because she has got money of her own. What's the use of coming back to the old thing, Guss?"

"Money, money, money!"

"Nothing more unfair was ever said to anyone."

Have I given any signs of selling myself for money? Have I been a fortune-hunter? No one has ever found me guilty of so much prudence. All I say is that having found out the way to go to the devil myself, I won't take any young woman I like with me there by marrying her. Heavens and earth! I can fancy myself returned from a wedding-tour with some charmer, like you, without a shilling at my banker's and beginning life at lodgings, somewhere down at Chelsea. Have you no imagination? Can't you see what it would be? Can't you fancy the stuffy sitting-room with the horsehair chairs, and the hashed mutton, and the cradle in the corner before long?"

"No, I can't," said Guss.

"I can; two cradles and very little of the hashed mutton; and my lady wife with no one to pin her dress for her but the maid-of-all-work with black fingers."

"It wouldn't be like that."

"It very soon would, if I were free to marry a girl without a fortune. And I know myself. I'm a very good fellow while the sun shines, but I couldn't stand hardship. I shouldn't come home to the hashed mutton. I should dine at the club, even though I had to borrow the money. I should come to hate the cradle and its occupant, and the mother of its occupant. I should take to drink, and should blow my brains out just as the second cradle came. I can see it all as plain as a pikestaff. I often lie awake the whole night and look at it. You and I, Guss, have made a mistake from the beginning. Being poor people we have lived as though we were rich."

"I have never done so."

"Oh, yes, you have. Instead of dining out in Fitzroy Square and drinking tea in Tavistock Place, you have gone to balls in Grosvenor Square and been presented at Court."

"It wasn't my fault."

"It has been so, and therefore you should have made up your mind to marry a rich man."

"Who was it asked me to love him?"

"Say that I did, if you please. Upon my word I forget how it began, but say that it was my fault. Of course it was my fault. Are you going to blow me up for that? I see a girl, and first like her, and then I love her, and then I tell her so; or else she finds it out without my telling. Was that a sin you can't forgive?"

"I never said it was a sin."

"I don't mind being a worm, but I won't be trodden upon overmuch. Was there ever a moment in which you thought that I thought of marrying you?"

"A great many, Jack."

"Did I ever say so?"

"Never. I'll do you justice there. You have been very cautious."

"Of course you can be severe, and of course I am bound to bear it. I have been cautious—for your sake!"

"Oh, Jack!"

"For your sake. When I first saw how it was going to be—how it might be between you and me—I took care to say outright that I couldn't marry unless a girl had money."

"There will be something—when papa dies."

"The most healthy middle-aged gentleman in London! There might be half-a-dozen cradles, Guss, be-

fore that day. If it will do you good, you shall say I'm the greatest rascal walking."

"That will do me no good."

"But I don't know that I can give you any other privilege."

Then there was a long pause, during which they were sauntering together under an old oak-tree in the park. "Do you love me, Jack?" she then asked, standing close up to him.

"God bless my soul! That's going back to the beginning."

"You are heartless—absolutely heartless. It has come to that with you that any real idea of love is out of the question."

"I can't afford it, my dear."

"But is there no such thing as love that you can't help? Can you drop a girl out of your heart altogether simply because she has got no money? I suppose you did love me once?" Here Jack scratched his head. "You did love me once?" she said, persevering with her question.

"Of course I did," said Jack, who had no objection to make assurances of the past.

"And you don't now?"

"Whoever said so? What's the good of talking about it?"

"Do you think you owe me nothing?"

"What's the good of owing, if a man can't pay his debts?"

"You will own nothing then?"

"Yes, I will. If anyone left me twenty thousand pounds to-morrow, then I should owe you something."

"What would you owe me?"

"Half of it."

"And how would you pay me?" He thought awhile before he made his answer. He knew that in that case he would not wish to pay the debt in the only way in which it would be payable. "You mean then that you would—marry me?"

"I shouldn't be afraid of the hashed mutton and cradles."

"In that case you—would marry me?"

"A man has no right to take so much on himself as to say that."

"Psha!"

"I suppose I should. I should make a devilish bad husband even then."

"Why should you be worse than others?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I was made worse. I can't fancy myself doing any duty well. If I had a wife of my own I should be sure to fall in love with somebody else's."

"Lady George, for instance."

"No—not Lady George. It would not be with somebody whom I had learned to think the very best woman in all the world. I am very bad, but I'm not just bad enough to make love to her. Or rather I am very foolish, but not just foolish enough to think that I could win her."

"I suppose she's just the same as others, Jack."

"She's not just the same to me. But I'd rather not talk about her, Guss. I'm going to Killancodlem in a day or two, and I shall leave this to-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Well—yes—to-morrow. I must be a day or two in town, and there is not much doing here. I'm tired of the old Marquis, who is the most ill-natured brute I ever came across in my life, and there's no more

fun to be made of the Baroness. I'm not sure but that she has the best of the fun. I didn't think there was an old woman in the world could get a five-pound note out of me; but she has."

"How could you be so foolish?"

"How, indeed! You'll go back to London?"

"I suppose so—unless I drown myself."

"Don't do that, Guss?"

"I often think it will be best. You don't know what my life is—how wretched. And you made it so."

"Is that fair, Guss?"

"Quite fair! Quite true! You have made it miserable. You know you have. Of course you know it."

"Can I help it now?"

"Yes, you can. I can be patient if you will say that it shall be some day. I could put up with anything if you would let me hope. When you have got that twenty thousand pounds——?"

"But I shall never have it."

"If you do—will you marry me then? Will you promise me that you will never marry anybody else?"

"I never shall."

"But will you promise me? If you will not say so much as that to me you must be false indeed. When you have the twenty thousand pounds will you marry me?"

"Oh, certainly."

"And you can laugh about such a matter when I am pouring out my very soul to you? You can make a joke of it when it is all my life to me! Jack, if you will say that it shall happen some day—some day—I will be happy. If you won't—I can only die. It may be play to you, but it's death to me." He looked at her, and saw that she was quite in earnest.

She was not weeping, but there was a drawn, heavy look about her face which, in truth, touched his heart. Whatever might be his faults he was not a cruel man. He had defended himself without any scruples of conscience when she had seemed to attack him, but now he did not know how to refuse her request. It amounted to so little! "I don't suppose it will ever take place, but I think I ought to allow myself to consider myself as engaged to you," she said.

"As it is you are free to marry anyone else," he replied.

"I don't care for such freedom. I don't want it. I couldn't marry a man whom I didn't love."

"Nobody knows what they can do till they're tried."

"Do you suppose, sir, I've never been tried? But I can't bring myself to laugh now, Jack. Don't joke now. Heaven knows when we may see each other again. You will promise me that, Jack?"

"Yes—if you wish it." And so at last she had got a promise from him! She said nothing more to fix it, fearing that in doing so she might lose it; but she threw herself into his arms and buried her face upon his bosom.

Afterwards, when she was leaving him, she was very solemn in her manner to him. "I will say good-bye now, Jack, for I shall hardly see you again to speak to. You do love me?"

"You know I do."

"I am so true to you! I have always been true to you. God bless you, Jack. Write me a line sometimes." Then he escaped, having brought her back to the garden among the flowers, and he wandered away by himself across the park. At last he had en-

gaged himself. He knew that it was so, and he knew that she would tell all her friends. Adelaide Houghton would know, and would, of course, congratulate him. There never could be a marriage. That would, of course, be out of the question. But, instead of being the Jack de Baron of old, at any rate free as air, he would be the young man engaged to marry Augusta Mildmay. And then he could hardly now refuse to answer the letters which she would be sure to write to him, at least twice a week. There had been a previous period of letter-writing, but that had died a natural death through utter neglect on his part. But now—— It might be as well that he should take advantage of the new law and exchange into an Indian regiment.

But, even in his present condition, his mind was not wholly occupied with Augusta Mildmay. The evil words which had been spoken to him of Mary had not been altogether fruitless. His cousin Adelaide had told him over and over again that Lady George was as other women—by which his cousin had intended to say that Lady George was the same as herself. Augusta Mildmay had spoken of his Phoenix in the same strain. The Marquis had declared her to be utterly worthless. It was not that he wished to think of her as they thought, or that he could be brought so to think; but these suggestions, coming as they did from those who knew how much he liked the woman, amounted to ridicule aimed against the purity of his worship. They told him—almost told him—that he was afraid to speak of love to Lady George. Indeed he was afraid, and within his own breast he was in some sort proud of his fear. But, nevertheless, he was touched by their ridicule.

He and Mary had certainly been dear friends. Certainly that friendship had given great umbrage to her husband. Was he bound to keep away from her because of her husband's anger? He knew that they two were not living together. He knew that the Dean would at any rate welcome him. And he knew, too, that there was no human being he wished to see again so much as Lady George. He had no purpose as to anything that he would say to her, but he was resolved that he would see her. If then some word warmer than any he had yet spoken should fall from him, he would gather from her answer what her feelings were towards him. In going back to London on the morrow he must pass by Brotherton, and he would make his arrangements so as to remain there for an hour or two.

CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER LOVE

THE party at Rudham Park had hardly been a success—nor was it much improved in wit or gaiety when Mrs. Montacute Jones, Lord Giblet, and Jack de Baron had gone away, and Canon Houldenough and his wife, with Mr. Groschut, had come in their places. This black influx, as Lord Brotherton called it, had all been due to consideration for his lordship. Mr. de Baron thought that his guest would like to see, at any rate, one of his own family, and Lady Alice Holdenough was the only one whom he could meet. As to Mr. Groschut, he was the Dean's bitterest enemy, and would, therefore, it was thought, be welcome. The Bishop had been asked, as Mr. de Baron was one who found it expedient to make sacrifices to respectability; but, as was well known, the Bishop never went anywhere except to clerical houses. Mr. Groschut, who was a younger man, knew that it behoved him to be all things to all men, and that he could not be efficacious among sinners unless he would allow himself to be seen in their paths. Care was, of course, taken that Lady Alice should find herself alone with her brother. It was probably expected that the Marquis would be regarded as less of an ogre in the country if it were known that he had had communication with one of the family without quarrelling with her. "So you're come here," he

said. "I didn't know that people so pious would enter De Baron's doors."

"Mr. de Baron is a very old friend of the Canon's. I hope he isn't very wicked, and I'm afraid we are not very pious."

"If you don't object, of course I don't. So they've all gone back to the old house?"

"Mamma is there."

"And George?" he asked in a sharp tone.

"And George—at present."

"George is, I think, the biggest fool I ever came across in my life. He is so cowed by that man whose daughter he has married that he doesn't know how to call his soul his own."

"I don't think that, Brotherton. He never goes to the Deanery to stay there."

"Then what makes him quarrel with me? He ought to know on which side his bread is buttered."

"He had a great deal of money with her, you know."

"If he thinks his bread is buttered on that side, let him stick to that side and say so. I will regard none of my family as on friendly terms with me who associate with the Dean of Brotherton or his daughter after what took place up in London." Lady Alice felt this to be a distinct threat to herself, but she allowed it to pass by without notice. She was quite sure that the Canon would not quarrel with the Dean out of deference to his brother-in-law. "The fact is, they should all have gone away as I told them, especially when George had married the girl and got her money. It don't make much difference to me, but it will make a deal to him."

"How is Popenjoy, Brotherton?" asked Lady Alice, anxious to change the conversation.

"I don't know anything about him."

"What!"

"He has gone back to Italy with his mother. How can I tell? Ask the Dean. I don't doubt that he knows all about him. He has people following them about, and watching every mouthful they eat."

"I think he has given all that up."

"Not he. He'll have to, unless he means to spend more money than I think he has got."

"George is quite satisfied about Popenjoy now," said Lady Alice.

"I fancy George didn't like the expense. But he began it, and I'll never forgive him. I fancy it was he and Sarah between them. They'll find that they will have had the worst of it. The poor little beggar hadn't much life in him. Why couldn't they wait?"

"Is it so bad as that, Brotherton?"

"They tell me he is not a young Hercules. Oh, yes—you can give my love to my mother. Tell her that if I don't see her it is all George's fault. I am not going to the house while he's there." To the Canon he hardly spoke a word, nor was the Canon very anxious to talk to him. But it became known throughout the country that the Marquis had met his sister at Rudham Park, and the general effect was supposed to be good.

"I shall go back to-morrow, De Baron," he said to his host that same afternoon. This was the day on which Jack had gone to Brotherton.

"We shall be sorry to lose you. I'm afraid it has been rather dull."

"Not more dull than usual. Everything is dull after a certain time of life, unless a man has made some fixed line for himself. Some men can eat and drink a great deal, but I haven't got stomach for that. Some men play cards; but I didn't begin early enough to win money, and I don't like losing it. The sort of things that a man does care for die away from him, and of course it becomes dull."

"I wonder you don't have a few horses in training."

"I hate horses, and I hate being cheated."

"They don't cheat me," said Mr. de Baron.

"Ah—very likely. They would me. I think I made a mistake, De Baron, in not staying at home and looking after the property."

"It's not too late, now."

"Yes it is. I could not do it. I could not remember the tenants' names, and I don't care about game. I can't throw myself into a litter of young foxes, or get into a fury of passion about pheasants' eggs. It's all beastly nonsense, but if a fellow could only bring himself to care about it that wouldn't matter. I don't care about anything."

"You read."

"No, I don't. I pretend to read—a little. If they had left me alone I think I should have had myself bled to death in a warm bath. But I won't now. That man's daughter shan't be Lady Brotherton if I can help it. I have rather liked being here on the whole, though why the d—— you should have a German impostor in your house, and a poor clergyman, I can't make out."

"He's the Deputy-Bishop of the diocese."

"But why have the Bishop himself unless he hap-

pen to be a friend? Does your daughter like her marriage?"

"I hope so. She does not complain."

"He's an awful ass—and always was. I remember when you used always to finish up your books by making him bet as you pleased."

"He always won."

"And now you've made him marry your daughter. Perhaps he has won there. I like her. If my wife would die and he would die, we might get up another match and cut out Lord George after all." This speculation was too deep even for Mr. de Baron, who laughed and shuffled himself about, and got out of the room.

"Wouldn't you have liked to be a marchioness," he said, some hours afterwards, to Mrs. Houghton. She was in the habit of sitting by him and talking to him late in the evening, while he was sipping his curacao and soda-water, and had become accustomed to hear odd things from him. He liked her because he could say what he pleased to her, and she would laugh and listen, and show no offence. But this last question was very odd. Of course she thought that it referred to the old overtures made to her by Lord George; but in that case, had she married Lord George, she could only have been made a marchioness by his own death—by that and by the death of the little Popenjoy of whom she had heard so much.

"If it had come in my way fairly," she said, with an arch smile.

"I don't mean that you should have murdered anybody. Suppose you had married me?"

"You never asked me, my lord."

"You were only eight or nine years old when I saw you last."

"Isn't it a pity you didn't get yourself engaged to me then? Such things have been done."

"If the coast were clear I wonder whether you'd take me now?"

"The coast isn't clear, Lord Brotherton."

"No, by George. I wish it were, and so do you too, if you'd dare to say so."

"You think I should be sure to take you."

"I think you would. I should ask you at any rate. I'm not so old by ten years as Houghton."

"Your age would not be the stumbling-block."

"What then?"

"I didn't say there would be any. I don't say that there would not. It's a kind of thing that a woman doesn't think of."

"It's just the kind of thing that women do think of."

"Then they don't talk about it, Lord Brotherton. Your brother, you know, did want me to marry him."

"What, George? Before Houghton?"

"Certainly—before I had thought of Mr. Houghton."

"Why the deuce did you refuse him? Why did you let him take that little——" He did not fill up the blank, but Mrs. Houghton quite understood that she was to suppose everything that was bad. "I never heard of this before."

"It wasn't for me to tell you."

"What an ass you were."

"Perhaps so. What should we have lived upon? Papa would not have given us an income."

"I could."

"But you wouldn't. You didn't know me then."

"Perhaps you'd have been just as keen as she is to rob my boy of his name. And so George wanted to marry you! Was he very much in love?"

"I was bound to suppose so, my lord."

"And you didn't care for him!"

"I didn't say that. But I certainly did not care to set up housekeeping without a house or without the money to get one. Was I wrong?"

"I suppose a fellow ought to have money when he wants to marry. Well, my dear, there is no knowing what may come yet. Won't it be odd, if after all, you should be Marchioness of Brotherton some day? After that won't you give me a kiss before you say good-night?"

"I would have done if you had been my brother-in-law—or perhaps, if the people were not all moving about the next room. Good-night, Marquis."

"Good-night. Perhaps you'll regret some day that you haven't done what I asked."

"I might regret it more if I did."

Then she took herself off, inquiring in her own mind whether it might still be possible that she should ever preside in the drawing-room at Manor Cross. Had he not been very much in love with her, surely he would not have talked to her like that.

"I think I'll say good-bye to you, De Baron," the Marquis said to his host that night.

"You won't be going early."

"No; I never do anything early. But I don't like a fuss just as I am going. I'll get down and drive away to catch some train. My man will manage it all."

"You go to London?"

"I shall be in Italy within a week. I hate Italy, but I think I hate England worse. If I believed in heaven and thought I were going there, what a hurry I should be in to die."

"Let us know how Popenjoy is."

"You'll be sure to know whether he is dead or alive. There's nothing else to tell. I never write letters except to Knox, and very few to him. Good-night."

When the Marquis was in his room, his courier, or the man so called, came to undress him. "Have you heard anything to-day?" he asked in Italian. The man said that he had heard. A letter had reached him that afternoon from London. The letter had declared that little Popenjoy was sinking. "That will do, Bonni," he said. "I will get into bed by myself." Then he sat down and thought of himself, and his life, and his prospects—and of the prospects of his enemies.

CHAPTER XXI

POOR POPENJOY

ON the following morning the party at Rudham Park were assembled at breakfast between ten and eleven. It was understood that the Marquis was gone, or going. The Mildmays were still there, with the Baroness, and the Houghtons, and the black influx from the cathedral town. A few other new-comers had arrived on the previous day. Mr. Groschut, who was sitting next to the Canon, had declared his opinion that, after all, the Marquis of Brotherton was a very affable nobleman. "He's civil enough," said the Canon, "when people do just what he wants."

"A man of his rank and position of course expects to have some deference paid to him."

"A man of his rank and position should be very careful of the rights of others, Mr. Groschut."

"I'm afraid his brother did make himself troublesome. You're one of the family, Canon, and therefore, of course, know all about it."

"I know nothing at all about it, Mr. Groschut."

"But it must be acknowledged that the Dean behaved very badly. Violence!—personal violence! And from a clergyman—to a man of his rank!"

"You probably don't know what took place in that room. I'm sure I don't. But I'd rather trust the Dean than the Marquis any day. The Dean's a man!"

"But is he a clergyman?"

"Of course he is; and a father. If he had been

very much in the wrong we should have heard more about it through the police."

"I cannot absolve a clergyman for using personal violence," said Mr. Groschut, very grandly. "He should have borne anything sooner than degrade his sacred calling." Mr. Groschut had hoped to extract from the Canon some expression adverse to the Dean, and to be able to assure himself that he had enrolled a new ally.

"Poor dear little fellow!" Aunt Ju was saying to Mrs. Holdenough. Of course she was talking of Popenjoy. "And you never saw him?"

"No; I never saw him."

"I am told he was a lovely child."

"Very dark, I fancy."

"And all those—those doubts? They're all over now?"

"I never knew much about it, Miss Mildmay. I never inquired into it. For myself, I always took it for granted that he was Popenjoy. I think one always does take things for granted till somebody proves that it is not so."

"The Dean, I take it, has given it up altogether now," said Mrs. Houghton to old Lady Brabazon, who had come down especially to meet her nephew, the Marquis, but who had hardly dared to speak a word to him on the previous evening, and was now told that he was gone. Lady Brabazon for a week or two had been quite sure that Popenjoy was not Popenjoy, being at that time under the influence of a very strong letter from Lady Sarah. But, since that, a general idea had come to prevail that the Dean was wrong-headed, and Lady Brabazon had given in her adhesion to Popenjoy. She had gone so far

as to call at Scumberg's, and to leave a box of bonbons.

"I hope so, Mrs. Houghton; I do hope so. Quarrels are such dreadful things in families. Brotherton isn't, perhaps, all that he might have been."

"Not a bad fellow, though, after all."

"By no means, Mrs. Houghton, and quite what he ought to be in appearance. I always thought that George was very foolish."

"Lord George is foolish—sometimes."

"Very stubborn, you know, and pig-headed. And as for the Dean—it was great interference on his part, very great interference. I won't say that I like foreigners myself. I should be very sorry if Brabazon were to marry a foreigner. But if he chooses to do so I don't see why he is to be told that his heir isn't his heir. They say she is a very worthy woman, and devoted to him." At this moment the butler came in and whispered a word to Mr. de Baron, who immediately got up from his chair. "So my nephew hasn't gone," said Lady Brabazon. "That was a message from him. I heard his name."

Her ears had been correct. The summons which Mr. de Baron obeyed had come from the Marquis. He went upstairs at once, and found Lord Brotherton sitting in his dressing-gown, with a cup of chocolate before him, and a bit of paper in his hand. He did not say a word, but handed the paper, which was a telegram, to Mr. de Baron. As the message was in Italian, and as Mr. de Baron did not read the language, he was at a loss. "Ah! you don't understand it," said the Marquis. "Give it me. It's all over with little Popenjoy."

"Dead!" said Mr. de Baron.

"Yes. He has got away from all his troubles, lucky dog! He'll never have to think what he'll do with himself. They'd almost told me that it must be so before he went."

"I grieve for you greatly, Brotherton."

"There's no use in that, old fellow. I'm sorry to be a bother to you, but I thought it best to tell you. I don't understand much about what people call grief. I can't say that I was particularly fond of him, or that I shall personally miss him. They hardly ever brought him to me, and when they did, it bothered me. And yet, somehow it pinches me—it pinches me."

"Of course it does."

"It will be a triumph to the Dean and George. That's about the worst of it. But they haven't got it yet. Though I should be the most miserable dog on earth I'll go on living as long as I can keep my body and soul together. I'll have another son yet, if one is to be had for love or money. They shall have trouble enough before they find themselves at Manor Cross."

"The Dean'll be dead before that time—and so shall I," said Mr. de Baron.

"Poor little boy! You never saw him. They didn't bring him in when you were over at Manor Cross?"

"No—I didn't see him."

"They weren't very proud of showing him. He wasn't much to look at. Upon my soul I don't know whether he was legitimate or not, according to English fashions." Mr. de Baron stared. "They had something to stand upon, but—damn it—they went about it in such a dirty way! It don't matter now, you know, but you needn't repeat all this."

"Not a word," said Mr. de Baron, wondering why such a communication should have been made to him.

"And there was plenty of ground for a good fight. I hardly know whether she had been married or not. I never could quite find out." Again Mr. de Baron stared. "It's all over now."

"But if you were to have another son?"

"Oh! we're married now! There were two ceremonies. I believe the Dean knows quite as much about it as I do—very likely more. What a rumpus there has been about a rickety brat who was bound to die."

"Am I to tell them downstairs?"

"Yes—you might as well tell them. Wait till I'm gone. They'd say I'd concealed it if I didn't let them know, and I certainly shan't write. There's no Popenjoy now. If that young woman has a son he can't be Popenjoy as long as I live. I'll take care of myself. By George, I will! Fancy, if the Dean had killed me. He'd have made his own daughter a marchioness."

"But he'd have been hung."

"Then I wish he'd done it. I wonder how it would have gone. There was nobody there to see, nor to hear. We'll—I believe I'll think of going. There's a train at two. You'll let me have a carriage; won't you?"

"Certainly."

"Let me go out some back way, and don't say a word about this till I'm off. I wouldn't have them condoling with me, and rejoicing in their sleeves, for a thousand pounds. Tell Holdenough, or my sister—that'll be enough. Good-bye. If you want ever to see me again, you must come to Como." Then Mr.

de Baron took his leave, and the Marquis prepared for his departure.

As he was stepping into the carriage at the side door he was greeted by Mr. Groschut. "So your lordship is leaving us," said the Chaplain. The Marquis looked at him, muttered something, and snarled as he hurried up the step of the carriage. "I'm sorry that we are to lose your lordship so soon." Then there was another snarl. "I had one word I wanted to say."

"To me! What can you have to say to me?"

"If at any time I can do anything for your lordship at Brotherton——"

"You can't do anything. Go on." The last direction was given to the coachman, and the carriage was driven off, leaving Mr. Groschut on the path.

Before lunch everybody in the house knew that poor little Popenjoy was dead, and that the Dean had, in fact, won the battle—though not in the way that he had sought to win it. Lord Brotherton had, after a fashion, been popular at Rudham, but nevertheless, it was felt by them all that Lady George was a much greater woman to-day than she had been yesterday. It was felt also that the Dean was in the ascendant. The Marquis had been quite agreeable, making love to the ladies, and fairly civil to the gentlemen—excepting Mr. Groschut; but he certainly was not a man likely to live to eighty. He was married, and, as was generally understood, separated from his wife. They might all live to see Lady George Marchioness of Brotherton and a son of hers Lord Popenjoy.

"Dead!" said Lady Brabazon, when Lady Alice, with sad face, whispered to her the fatal news.

"He got a telegram this morning from Italy. Poor little boy!"

"And what'll he do now—the Marquis, I mean?"

"I suppose he'll follow his wife," said Lady Alice.

"Was he much cut up?"

"I didn't see him. He merely sent me word by Mr. de Baron." Mr. de Baron afterwards assured Lady Brabazon that the poor father had been very much cut up. Great pity was expressed throughout the party, but there was not one there who would not now have been civil to poor Mary.

The Marquis had his flowers, and his fruit, and his French novels on his way up to town, and kept his sorrow, if he felt it, very much to himself. Soon after his arrival at Scumberg's, at which place they were obliged to take him in as he was still paying for his rooms, he made it known that he should start for Italy in a day or two. On that night and on the next he did not go out in his brougham, nor did he give any offence to Mrs. Walker. London was as empty as London ever is, and nobody came to see him. For two days he did not leave his room, the same room in which the Dean had nearly killed him, and received nobody but his tailor and his hairdresser. I think that, in his way, he did grieve for the child who was gone, and who, had he lived, would have been the intended heir of his title and property. They must now all go from him to his enemies! And the things themselves were to himself of so very little value! Living alone at Scumberg's was not a pleasant life. Even going out in his brougham at nights was not very pleasant to him. He could do as he liked at Como, and people wouldn't grumble—but what was

there even at Como that he really liked to do? He had a half-worn-out taste for scenery which he had no longer energy to gratify by variation. It had been the resolution of his life to live without control, and now, at four-and-forty, he found that the life he had chosen was utterly without attraction. He had been quite in earnest in those regrets as to shooting, hunting, and the duties of an English country life. Though he was free from remorse, not believing in anything good, still he was open to a conviction that had he done what other people call good, he would have done better for himself. Something of envy stirred him as he read the records of a nobleman whose political life had left him no moment of leisure for his private affairs; something of envy when he heard of another whose cattle were the fattest in the land. He was connected with Lord Grassangrains, and had always despised that well-known breeder of bullocks; but he could understand now that Lord Grassangrains should wish to live, whereas life to him was almost unbearable. Lord Grassangrains probably had a good appetite.

On the last morning of his sojourn at Scumberg's he received two or three letters which he would willingly have avoided by running away had it been possible. The first he opened was from his old mother, who had not herself troubled him much with letters for some years past. It was as follows:

"DEAREST BROTHERTON,—I have heard about poor Popenjoy, and I am so unhappy. Darling little fellow! We are all very wretched here, and I have nearly cried my eyes out. I hope you won't go away without seeing me. If you'll let me, I'll go

up to London, though I haven't been there for I don't know how long. But perhaps you will come here to your own house. I do so wish you would.

"Your most affectionate mother,

"H. BROTHERTON.

"P. S.—Pray don't turn George out at the end of the month."

This he accepted without anger as being natural, but threw aside as being useless. Of course he would not answer it. They all knew that he never answered their letters. As to the final petition, he had nothing to say to it.

The next was from Lord George, and shall also be given.

"MY DEAR BROTHERTON,—I cannot let the tidings which I have just heard pass by without expressing my sympathy. I am very sorry indeed that you should have lost your son. I trust you will credit me for saying so much with absolute truth.

"Yours always,

"GEORGE GERMAIN."

"I don't believe a word of it," he said almost out loud. To his thinking it was almost impossible that what his brother said should be true. Why should he be sorry—he that had done his utmost to prove that Popenjoy was not Popenjoy? He crunched the letter up and cast it on one side. Of course he would not answer that.

The third was from a new correspondent; and that also the reader shall see.

"MY DEAR LORD MARQUIS,—Pray believe that had I known under what great affliction you were labouring when you left Rudham Park I should have been the last man in the world to intrude myself upon you. Pray believe me also when I say that I have heard of your great bereavement with sincere sympathy, and that I condole with you from the bottom of my heart. Pray remember, my dear lord, that if you will turn aright for consolation you certainly will not turn in vain.

"Let me add, though this is hardly the proper moment for such allusion, that both his lordship the Bishop and myself were most indignant when we heard of the outrage committed upon you at your hotel. I make no secret of my opinion that the present Dean of Brotherton ought to be called upon by the great Council of the Nation to vacate his promotion. I wish that the bench of bishops had the power to take him from his frock.

"I have the honour to be,

"My Lord Marquis,

"With sentiments of most unfeigned respect,

"Your lordship's most humble servant,

"JOSEPH GROSCHUT."

The Marquis smiled as he also threw this letter into the waste-paper basket, telling himself that birds of that feather very often did fall out with one another.

CHAPTER XXII

JACK DE BARON'S VIRTUE

WE must now go back to Jack de Baron, who left Rudham Park the same day as the Marquis—having started before the news of Lord Popenjoy's death had been brought downstairs by Mr. de Baron. Being only Jack de Baron he had sent to Brotherton for a fly, and in that conveyance he had himself taken to "The Lion," arriving there three or four hours before the time at which he purposed to leave the town. Indeed his arrangements had intentionally been left so open that he might if he liked remain the night—or if he pleased, remain a week at "The Lion." He thought it not improbable that the Dean might ask him to dinner, and, if so, he certainly would dine with the Dean.

He was very serious—considering who he was we may almost say solemn, as he sat in the fly. It was the rule of his life to cast all cares from him, and his grand principle to live from hand to mouth. He was almost a philosopher in his epicureanism, striving always that nothing should trouble him. But now he had two great troubles, which he could not throw off from him. In the first place, after having striven against it for the last four or five years with singular success, he had in a moment of weakness allowed himself to become engaged to Guss Mildmay. She had gone about it so subtly that he had found himself manacled almost before he knew that

the manacles were there. He had fallen into the trap of an hypothesis, and now felt that the preliminary conditions on which he had seemed to depend could never avail him. He did not mean to marry Guss Mildmay. He did not suppose that she thought he meant to marry her. He did not love her, and he did not believe very much in her love for him. But Guss Mildmay, having fought her battle in the world for many years with but indifferent success, now felt that her best chance lay in having a bond upon her old lover. He ought not to have gone to Rudham when he knew that she was to be there. He had told himself that before, but he had not liked to give up the only chance which had come in his way of being near Lady George since she had left London. And now he was an engaged man—a position which had always been to him full of horrors. He had run his bark on to the rock which it had been the whole study of his navigation to avoid. He had committed the one sin which he had always declared to himself that he never would commit. This made him unhappy.

And he was uneasy also—almost unhappy—respecting Lady George. People whom he knew to be bad had told him things respecting her which he certainly did not believe, but which he did not find it compatible with his usual condition of life altogether to disbelieve. If he had ever loved any woman he loved her. He certainly respected her as he had never respected any other young woman. He had found the pleasure to be derived from her society to be very different from that which had come from his friendship with others. With her he could be perfectly innocent, and at the same time completely happy. To dance with her, to ride with her, to walk with her, to sit with

the privilege of looking at her, was joy of itself, and required nothing beyond. It was a delight to him to have any little thing to do for her. When his daily life was in any way joined with hers there was a brightness in it which he thoroughly enjoyed though he did not quite understand. When that affair of the dance came, in which Lord George had declared his jealousy, he had been in truth very unhappy because she was unhappy, and he had been thoroughly angry with the man, not because the man had interfered with his own pleasures, but because of the injury and the injustice done to his wife. He found himself wounded, really hurt, because she had been made subject to calumny. When he tried to analyse the feeling he could not understand it. It was so different from anything that had gone before! He was sure that she liked him, and yet there was a moment in which he thought that he would purposely keep out of her way for the future, lest he might be a trouble to her. He loved her so well that his love for a while almost made him unselfish.

And yet—yet he might be mistaken about her. It had been the theory of his life that young married women became tired of their husbands, and one of his chief doctrines that no man should ever love in such a way as to believe in the woman he loves. After so many years, was he to give up his philosophy? Was he to allow the ground to be cut from under his feet by a young creature of twenty-one who had been brought up in a country town? Was he to run away because a husband had taken it into his head to be jealous? All the world had given him credit for his behaviour at the Kappa-kappa. He had gathered laurels—very much because he was supposed

to be the lady's lover. He had never boasted to others of the lady's favour; but he knew that she liked him, and he had told himself that he would be poor-spirited if he abandoned her.

He drove up to "The Lion" and ordered a room. He did not know whether he should want it, but he would at any rate bespeak it. And he ordered his dinner. Come what come might, he thought that he would dine and sleep at Brotherton that day. Finding himself so near to Lady George, he would not leave her quite at once. He asked at the inn whether the Dean was in Brotherton. Yes; the Dean was certainly at the Deanery. He had been seen about the city that morning. The inhabitants, when they talked about Brotherton, always called it the city. And were Lord George and Lady George at the Deanery? In answer to this question, the landlady, with something of a lengthened face, declared that Lady George was with her papa, but that Lord George was at Manor Cross. Then Jack de Baron strolled out towards the Close.

It was a little after one when he found himself at the cathedral door, and thinking that the Dean and his daughter might be at lunch, he went into the building, so that he might get rid of half an hour. He had not often been in cathedrals of late years, and now looked about him with something of awe. He could remember that when he was a child he had been brought here to church, and, as he stood in the choir with the obsequient verger at his elbow, he recollected how he had got through the minutes of a long sermon—a sermon that had seemed to be very long—in planning the way in which, if left to himself, he would climb to the pinnacle which culminated over

the bishop's seat, and thence make his way along the capitals and vantages of stonework, till he would ascend into the triforium and thus become lord and master of the old building. How much smaller his ambitions had become since then, and how much less manly. "Yes, sir; his lordship is here every Sunday when he is at the palace," said the verger. "But his lordship is ailing now."

"And the Dean?"

"The Dean always comes once a day to service when he is here; but the Dean has been much away of late. Since Miss Mary's marriage the Dean isn't in Brotherton as much as formerly."

"I know the Dean. I'm going to his house just now. They like him in Brotherton, I suppose?"

"That's according to their way of thinking, sir. We like him. I suppose you heard, sir, there was something of a row between him and Miss Mary's brother-in-law!" Jack said that he had heard of it. "There's them as say he was wrong."

"I say he was quite right."

"That's what we think, sir. It's got about that his lordship said some bad word of Miss Mary. A father wasn't to stand that because he's a clergyman, was he, sir?"

"The Dean did just what you or I would do."

"That's just it, sir. That's what we all say. Thank you, sir. You won't see Prince Edward's monument, sir? Gentlemen always do go down to the crypt." Jack wouldn't see the monument to-day, and, having paid his half-crown, was left to wander about alone through the aisles.

How would it have been with him if his life had been different; if he had become, perhaps, a clergy-

man and had married Mary Lovelace?—or if he had become anything but what he was with her for his wife? He knew that his life had been a failure, that the best of it was gone, and that even the best of it had been unsatisfactory. Many people liked him, but was there anyone who loved him? In all the world there was but one person that he loved, and she was the wife of another man. Of one thing at this moment he was quite sure—that he would never wound her ears by speaking of his love. Would it not be better that he should go away and see her no more? The very tone in which the verger had spoken of Miss Mary had thrown to the winds those doubts which had come from the teaching of Adelaide Houghton and Guss Mildmay. If she had been as they said, would even her father have felt for her as he did feel, and been carried away by his indignation at the sound of an evil word?

But he had asked after the Dean at the hotel, and had told the verger of his acquaintance, and had been seen by many in the town. He could not now leave the place without calling. So resolving, he knocked at last at the Deanery door, and was told that the Dean was at home. He asked for the Dean, and not for Lady George, and was shown into the library. In a minute the Dean was with him. "Come in and have some lunch," said the Dean. "We have this moment sat down. Mary will be delighted to see you—and so am I." Of course he went in to lunch, and in a moment was shaking hands with Mary, who in truth was delighted to see him.

"You've come from Rudham?" asked the Dean.

"This moment."

"Have they heard the news there?"

"What news?"

"Lord Brotherton is there, is he not?"

"I think he left to-day. He was to do so. I heard no news." He looked across to Mary, and saw that her face was sad and solemn.

"The child that they called Lord Popenjoy is dead," said the Dean. He was neither sad nor solemn. He could not control the triumph of his voice as he told the news.

"Poor little boy!" said Mary.

"Dead!" exclaimed Jack.

"I've just had a telegram from my lawyer in London. Yes; he's out of the way. Poor little fellow! As sure as I sit here he was not Lord Popenjoy."

"I never understood anything about it," said Jack.

"But I did. Of course the matter is at rest now. I'm not the man to grudge anyone what belongs to him; but I do not choose that anyone belonging to me should be swindled. If she were to have a son now, he would be the heir."

"Oh, papa, do not talk in that way."

"Rights are rights, and the truth is the truth. Can anyone wish that such a property and such a title should go to the child of an Italian woman whom no one has seen or known?"

"Let it take its chance now, papa."

"Of course it must take its chance; but your chances must be protected."

"Papa, he was at any rate my nephew."

"I don't know that. In law I believe he was no such thing. But he has gone, and we need think of him no further." He was very triumphant. There was an air about him as though he had already won the great stake for which he had been playing. But

in the midst of it all he was very civil to Jack de Baron. "You will stay and dine with us to-day, Captain de Baron?"

"Oh, do," said Mary.

"We can give you a bed if you will sleep here."

"Thanks. My things are at the hotel, and I will not move them. I will come and dine if you'll have me."

"We shall be delighted. We can't make company of you, because no one is coming. I shouldn't wonder if Lord George rode over. He will if he hears of this. Of course he'll know to-morrow; but perhaps they will not have telegraphed to him. I should go out to Manor Cross, only I don't quite like to put my foot in that man's house." Jack could not but feel that the Dean treated him almost as though he were one of the family. "I rather think I shall ride out and risk it. You won't mind my leaving you?" Of course Jack declared that he would not for worlds be in the way. "Mary will play Badminton with you, if you like it. Perhaps you can get hold of Miss Pountner and Grey, and make up a game." Mr. Grey was one of the minor canons, and Miss Pountner was the canon's daughter.

"We shall do very well, papa. I'm not mad after Badminton, and I daresay we shall manage without Miss Pountner."

The Dean went off, and, in spite of the feud, did ride over to Manor Cross. His mind was so full of the child's death and of the all but certainty of coming glory which now awaited his daughter, that he could not keep himself quiet. It seemed to him that a just Providence had interfered to take that child away. And, as the Marquis hated him, so did he

hate the Marquis. He had been willing at first to fight the battle fairly without personal animosity. On the Marquis's first arrival he had offered him the right hand of fellowship. He remembered it all accurately—how the Marquis had on that occasion ill-used and insulted him. No man knew better than the Dean when he was well-treated and when ill-treated. And then this lord had sent for him for the very purpose of injuring and wounding him through his daughter's name. His wrath on that occasion had not all expended itself in the blow. After that word had been spoken he was the man's enemy forever. There could be no forgiveness. He could not find room in his heart for even a spark of pity because the man had lost an only child. Had not the man tried to do worse than kill his only child—his daughter? Now the pseudo-Popenjoy was dead, and the Dean was in a turmoil of triumph. It was essential to him that he should see his son-in-law. His son-in-law must be made to understand what it would be to be the father of the future Marquis of Brotherton.

"I think I'll just step across to the inn," said Jack, when the Dean had left them.

"And we'll have a game of croquet when you come back. I do like croquet, though papa laughs at me. I think I like all games. It is so nice to be doing something."

Jack sauntered back to the inn, chiefly that he might have a further opportunity of considering what he would say to her. And he did make up his mind. He would play croquet with all his might, and behave to her as though she were his dearest sister.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW COULD HE HELP IT?

WHEN he returned she was out in the garden with her hat on and a mallet in her hand; but she was seated on one of a cluster of garden-chairs under a great cedar-tree. "I think it's almost too hot to play," she said. It was an August afternoon, and the sun was very bright in the heavens. Jack was of course quite willing to sit under the cedar-tree instead of playing croquet. He was prepared to do whatever she wished. If he could only know what subjects she would prefer, he would talk about them and nothing else. "How do you think papa is looking?" she asked.

"He always looks well."

"Ah; he was made dreadfully unhappy by that affair up in London. He never would talk about it to me; but he was quite ill while he thought the Marquis was in danger."

"I don't believe the Marquis was much the worse for it."

"They said he was, and papa for some time could not get over it. Now he is elated. I wish he would not be so glad because that poor little boy has died."

"It makes a great difference to him, Lady George—and to you."

"Of course it makes a difference, and of course

I feel it. I am as anxious for my husband as any other woman. If it should come fairly, as it were by God's doing, I am not going to turn up my nose at it."

"Is not this fairly?"

"Oh, yes. Papa did not make the little boy die, of course. But I don't think that people should long for things like this. If they can't keep from wishing them, they should keep their wishes to themselves. It is so like coveting other people's goods. Don't you think we ought to keep the commandments, Captain de Baron?"

"Certainly—if we can."

"Then we oughtn't to long for other people's titles."

"If I understand it, the Dean wanted to prevent somebody else from getting a title which wasn't his own. That wouldn't be breaking the commandment."

"Of course, I'm not finding fault with papa. He would not for worlds try to take anything that wasn't his—or mine. But it's so sad about the little boy."

"I don't think the Marquis cared for him."

"Oh, he must have cared! His only child! And the poor mother;—think how she must feel."

"In spite of it all, I do think it's a very good thing that he's dead," said Jack, laughing.

"Then you ought to keep it to yourself, sir. It's a very horrid thing to say so. Wouldn't you like to smoke a cigar? You may, you know. Papa always smokes out here, because he says Mr. Groschut can't see him."

"Mr. Groschut is at Rudham," said Jack, as he took a cigar out of his case and lit it.

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"At Rudham? What promotion?"

"He didn't seem to me to be a first-class sort of a fellow."

"Quite a last-class sort of fellow, if there is a last class. I'll tell you a secret, Captain de Baron: Mr. Groschut is my pet abomination. If I hate anybody, I hate him. I think I do really hate Mr. Groschut. I almost wish that they would make him bishop of some unhealthy place."

"So that he might go away and die?"

"If the mosquitoes would eat him day and night, that would be enough. Who else was there at Rudham?"

"Mrs. Montacute Jones."

"Dear Mrs. Jones. I do like Mrs. Jones."

"And Adelaide Houghton with her husband." Mary turned up her nose and made a grimace as the Houghtons were named. "You used to be very fond of Adelaide."

"Very fond is a long word. We were by way of being friends; but we are friends no longer."

"Tell me what she did to offend you, Lady George? I know there was something."

"You are her cousin. Of course I am not going to abuse her to you."

"She's not half so much my cousin as you are my friend—if I may say so. What did she do or what did she say?"

"She painted her face."

"If you're going to quarrel, Lady George, with every woman in London who does that, you'll have a great many enemies."

"And the hair at the back of her head got bigger and bigger every month. Papa always quotes some-

thing about Dr. Fell when he's asked why he does not like anybody. She's Dr. Fell to me."

"I don't think she quite knows why you've cut her."

"I'm quite sure she does, Captain de Baron. She knows all about it. And now, if you please, we won't talk of her any more. Who else was there at Rudham?"

"All the old set. Aunt Ju and Guss."

"Then you were happy."

"Quite so. I believe that no one knows all about that better than you do."

"You ought to have been happy."

"Lady George, I thought you always told the truth."

"I try to; and I think you ought to have been happy. You don't mean to tell me that Miss Mildmay is nothing to you?"

"She is a very old friend."

"Ought she not to be more? Though of course I have no right to ask."

"You have a right if anyone has. I haven't a friend in the world I would trust as I would you. No; she ought not to be more."

"Have you never given her a right to think that she would be more?"

He paused a moment or two before he answered. Much as he wished to trust her, anxious as he was that she should be his real friend, he could hardly bring himself to tell her all that had taken place at Rudham Park during the last day or two. Up to that time he never had given Miss Mildmay any right. So, at least, he still assured himself. But now—it certainly was different now. He desired of

all things to be perfectly honest with Lady George—to be even innocent in all that he said to her; but—just for this once—he was obliged to deviate into a lie. “Never!” he said.

“Of course it is not for me to inquire further.”

“It is very hard to describe the way in which such an intimacy has come about. Guss Mildmay and I have been very much thrown together; but, even had she wished it, we never could have married. We have no means.”

“And yet you live like rich people.”

“We have no means because we have lived like rich people.”

“You have never asked her to marry you?”

“Never.”

“Nor made her think that you would ask her? That comes to the same thing, Captain de Baron.”

“How am I to answer that? How am I to tell it all without seeming to boast. When it first came to pass that we knew ourselves well enough to admit of such a thing being said between us, I told her that marriage was impossible. Is not that enough?”

“I suppose so,” said Lady George, who remembered well every word that Guss Mildmay had said to herself. “I don’t know why I should inquire about it, only I thought——”

“I know what you thought.”

“What did I think?”

“That I was a heartless scoundrel.”

“No, never. If I had, I should not have—have cared about it. Perhaps it has been unfortunate.”

“Most unfortunate!” Then again there was a pause, during which he went on smoking, while she played with her mallet. “I wish I could tell you

everything about it; only I can't. Did she ever speak to you?"

"Yes, once."

"And what did she say?"

"I cannot tell you that either."

"I have endeavoured to be honest; but sometimes it is so difficult. One wants sometimes to tell the whole truth, but it won't come out. I am engaged to her now."

"You are engaged to her!"

"And two days hence I was free as ever."

"Then I may congratulate you."

"No, no. It makes me miserable. I do not love her. There is one other person that I care for, and I never can care for anyone else. There is one woman that I love, and I never really loved anyone else."

"That is very sad, Captain de Baron."

"Is it not? I can never marry Miss Mildmay."

"And yet you have promised?"

"I have promised under certain circumstances which can never, never come about."

"Why did you promise if you do not love her?"

"Cannot you understand without my telling you? I cannot tell you that. I am sure you understand."

"I suppose I do. Poor Miss Mildmay!"

"And poor Jack de Baron!"

"Yes; poor Jack de Baron also! No man should talk to a girl of marrying her unless he loves her. It is different with a girl. She may come to love a man. She may love a man better than all the world, though she hardly knew him when she married him. If he is good to her, she will certainly do so. But



if a man marries a woman without loving her, he will soon hate her."

"I shall never marry Miss Mildmay."

"And yet you have said you would?"

"I told you that I wanted to tell you everything. It is so pleasant to have someone to trust, even though I should be blamed as you are blaming me. It simply means that I can marry no one else."

"But you love someone?" She felt, when she was asking the question, that it was indiscreet. When the assertion was made she had not told herself that she was the woman. She had not thought it. For an instant she had tried to imagine who that other one could be. But yet, when the words were out of her mouth, she knew that they were indiscreet. Was she not indiscreet in holding any such conversation with a man who was not her brother or even her cousin! She wished that he were her cousin, so that she might become the legitimate depository of his secrets. Though she was scolding him for his misdoings, yet she hardly liked him the less for them. She thought that she did understand how it was, and she thought that the girl was more in fault than the man. It was not till the words had passed her mouth and the question had been asked that she felt the indiscretion. "But you love someone else?"

"Certainly, I do; but I had not meant to speak about that."

"I will inquire into no secrets."

"Is that a secret? Can it be a secret? Do you not know that ever since I knew you I have had no pleasure but in being with you, and talking to you, and looking at you?"

"Captain de Baron!" As she spoke she rose from

the room.

her seat as though she would at once leave him and go back into the house.

"You must hear me now. You must not go without hearing me. I will not say a word to offend you."

"You have offended me."

"How could I help it? What was I to do? What ought I to have said? Pray do not go, Lady George."

"I did not think you would have insulted me. I did trust you."

"You may trust me. On my honour as a gentleman, I will never say another word that you can take amiss. I wish I could tell you all my feelings. One cannot help one's love."

"A man may govern his words."

"As I trust in heaven, I had determined that I would never say a syllable to you that I might not have spoken to my sister. Have I asked you to love me? I have not thought it possible that you should do so. I know you to be too good. It has never come within my dreams."

"It is wicked to think of it."

"I have not thought of it. I will never think of it. You are like an angel to me. If I could write poetry, I should write about you. If ever I build castles in the air and think what I might have been if things had gone well with me, I try to fancy then that I might have had you for a wife. That is not wicked. That is not a crime. Can you be angry with me because, having got to know you as I do, I think you better, nicer, jollier, more beautiful than anyone else? Have you never really loved a friend?"

"I love my husband with all my heart—oh, better than all the world."

Jack did not quite understand this. His angel was an angel. He was sure of that. And he wished her to be still an angel. But he could not understand how any angel could passionately love Lord George Germain—especially this angel who had been so cruelly treated by him. Had she loved him better than all the world when he walked her out of Mrs. Jones's drawing-room, reprimanding her before all the guests for her conduct in dancing the Kappa-kappa? But this was a matter not open to argument. "I may still be your friend?" he said.

"I think you had better not come again."

"Do not say that, Lady George. If I have done wrong, forgive me. I think you must admit that I could hardly help myself."

"Not help yourself!"

"Did I not tell you that I wanted you to know the whole truth? How could I make you understand about Miss Mildmay without telling it all? Say that you will forgive me."

"Say that it is not so, and then I will forgive you."

"No. It is so, and it must be so. It will remain so always, but yet you will surely forgive me, if I never speak of it again. You will forgive me and understand me, and when hereafter you see me as a middle-aged man about town, you will partly know why it is so. Oh, dear; I forgot to tell you. We had another old friend of yours at Rudham—a very particular friend." Of course she had forgiven him, and now she was thankful to him for his sudden breach of the subject; but she was not herself strong enough immediately to turn to another matter. "Who do you think was there?"

"How can I tell?"

"The Baroness."

"No?"

"As large as life."

"Baroness Banmann at Mr. de Baron's!"

"Yes—Baroness Banmann. Aunt Julia had contrived to get permission to bring her, and the joke was that she did us all out of our money. She got a five-pound note from me."

"What a goose you were."

"And ten from Lord Brotherton! I think that was the greatest triumph. She was down on him without the slightest compunction. I never saw a man so shot in my life. He sent me to look for the money, and she never left me till I had got it for her."

"I thought Aunt Ju had had enough of her."

"I should think she has now. And we had Lord Gible. Lord Gible is to marry Miss Patmore Green after all."

"Poor Lord Gible!"

"And poor Miss Patmore Green. I don't know which will have the worst of it. They can practise the Kappa-kappa together for consolation. It is all Mrs. Jones's doing, and she is determined that he shan't escape. I'm to go down to Killancodlem and help."

"Why should you have anything to do with it?"

"Very good shooting, and plenty to eat and drink—and Gible is a friend of mine; so I'm bound to lend a hand. And now, Lady George, I think I'll go to the hotel and be back to dinner. We are friends?"

"Yes; if you promise not to offend me."

"I will never offend you. I will never say a word that all the world might not hear—except this once

—to thank you.” Then he seized her hand and kissed it. “You shall always be a sister to me,” he said. “When I am in trouble I will come to you. Say that you will love me as a brother.”

“I will always regard you as a friend.”

“Regard is a cold word, but I will make the most of it. Here is your father.”

At this moment they were coming from a side-path on to the lawn, and as they did so the Dean appeared upon the terrace through the Deanery-room window. With the Dean was Lord George, and Mary, as soon as she saw him, rushed up to him and threw her arms round his neck. “Oh, George—dear, dearest George—papa said that perhaps you would come. You are going to stay?”

“He will dine here,” said the Dean.

“Only dine!”

“I cannot stay longer to-day,” said Lord George, with his eye upon Captain de Baron. The Dean had told him that De Baron was there; but still, when he saw that the man had been walking with his wife, a renewed uneasiness came upon him. It could not be right that the man from whose arms he had rescued her on the night of the ball should be left alone with her a whole afternoon in the Deanery garden! She was thoughtless as a child; but it seemed to him that the Dean was as thoughtless as his daughter. The Dean must know what people had said. The Dean had himself seen that horrid dance, with its results. The awful accusation made by the Marquis had been uttered in the Dean’s ears. Because that had been wicked and devilishly false, the Dean’s folly was not the less. Lord George embraced his wife, but she knew from the touch of his arm

round her waist that there was something wrong with him.

The two men shook hands of course, and then De Baron went out, muttering something to the Dean as to his being back to dinner. "I can't say I like that young man," said Lord George.

"I like him very much," replied the Dean. "He is always good-humoured, and I think he's honest. I own to a predilection for happy people."

Mary was of course soon upstairs with her husband. "I thought you would come," she said, hanging on him.

"I did not like not to see you after the news. It is important. You must feel that."

"Poor little boy! Don't you grieve for them?"

"Yes, I do. Brotherton has treated me very badly, but I do feel for him. I shall write to him and say so. But that will not alter the fact. Popenjoy is dead."

"No; it will not alter the fact." He was so solemn with her that she hardly knew how to talk to him.

"Popenjoy is dead—if he was Popenjoy. I suppose he was; but that does not signify now."

"Not in the least, I suppose."

"And if you have a son——"

"Oh, George?"

"He won't be Popenjoy yet."

"Or perhaps ever."

"Or perhaps ever; but a time will probably come when he will be Popenjoy. We can't help thinking about it, you know."

"Of course not."

"I'm sure I don't want my brother to die."

"I am sure I don't."

"But the family has to be kept up. I do care about the family. They all think at Manor Cross that you should go over at once."

"Are you going to stay there, George? Of course I will go if you are going to stay there."

"They think you should come, though it were only for a few days."

"And then? Of course I will go, George, if you say so. I have had my visit with papa—as much as I had a right to expect. And, oh, George, I do so long to be with you again." Then she hung upon him and kissed him. It must have been impossible that he should be really jealous, though Captain de Baron had been there the whole day. Nor was he jealous, except with that Cæsarian jealousy lest she should be unfortunate enough to cause a whisper derogatory to his marital dignity.

The matter had been fully discussed at Manor Cross; and the Manor Cross conclave, meaning of course Lady Sarah, had thought that Mary should be brought to the house, if only for a day or two, if only that people in Brothershire might know that there had been no quarrel between her and her husband. That she should have visited her father might be considered as natural. It need not be accounted as quite unnatural that she should have done so without her husband. But now—now it was imperative that Brothershire should know that the mother of the future Lord Popenjoy was on good terms with the family. "Of course her position is very much altered," Lady Susanna had said in private to Lady Amelia. The old Marchioness felt a real longing to see "dear Mary," and to ask becoming questions as to her condition. And it was quite understood that

she was not to be required to make any cloaks or petticoats. The garments respecting which she must be solicitous for the next six months would, as the Marchioness felt, be of a very august nature. Oh, that the future baby might be born at Manor Cross. The Marchioness did not see why Lord George should leave the house at all. Brotherton couldn't know anything about it in Italy, and if George must go, Mary might surely be left there for the event. The Marchioness declared that she could die happy if she might see another Popenjoy born in the purple of Manor Cross.

"When am I to go?" asked Mary. She was sitting now close to him, and the question was asked with full delight.

"I do not know whether you can be ready to-morrow."

"Of course I can be ready to-morrow. Oh, George, to be back with you! Even for ten days it seems to be a great happiness. But, if you go, then of course you will take me with you." There was a reality about this which conquered him, even in spite of Captain de Baron, so that he came down to dinner in good-humour with the world.

CHAPTER XXIV

SIR HENRY SAID IT WAS THE ONLY THING

THE dinner at the Deanery went off without much excitement. Captain de Baron would, of course, have preferred that Lord George should have remained at Manor Cross, but, under no circumstances could he have had much more to say to the lady. They understood each other now. He was quite certain that any evil thing spoken of her had been sheer slander, and yet he had managed to tell her everything of himself without subjecting himself to her undying anger. When she left the drawing-room, the conversation turned again upon the great Popenjoy question, and from certain words which fell from the Dean, Jack was enabled to surmise that Lord George had reason to hope that an heir might be born to him. "He does not look as though he would live long himself," said the Dean, speaking of the Marquis.

"I trust he may with all my heart," said Lord George.

"That's another question," replied the Dean. "I only say that he doesn't look like it." Lord George went away early, and Jack de Baron thought it prudent to retire at the same time. "So you're going to-morrow, dear," said the Dean.

"Yes, papa. Is it not best?"

"Oh, yes. Nothing could be worse than a prolonged separation. He means to be honest and good."

"He is honest and good, papa."

"You have had your triumph."

"I did not want to triumph;—not at least over him."

"After what had occurred it was necessary that you should have your own way in coming here. Otherwise he would have triumphed. He would have taken you away, and you and I would have been separated. Of course you are bound to obey him—but there must be limits. He would have taken you away as though in disgrace, and that I could not stand. There will be an end of that now. God knows when I shall see you again, Mary."

"Why not, papa?"

"Because he hasn't got over his feeling against me. I don't think he ever gets over any feeling. Having no home of his own, why does he not bring you here?"

"I don't think he likes the idea of being a burden to you."

"Exactly. He has not cordiality enough to feel that when two men are in a boat together, as he and I are because of you, all that feeling should go to the wind. He ought not to be more ashamed to sit at my table and drink of my cup than you are. If it were all well between us and he had the property, should I scruple to go and stay at Manor Cross?"

"You would still have your own house to go back to."

"So will he—after awhile. But it can't be altered, dear, and God forbid that I should set you against him. He is not a rake nor a spendthrift, nor will he run after other women." Mary thought of Mrs. Houghton, but she held her tongue. "He is not a bad man, and I think he loves you."

"I am sure he does."

"But I can't help feeling sad at parting with you. I suppose I shall at any rate be able to see you up in town next season." The Dean, as he said this, was almost weeping.

Mary, when she was alone in her room, of course thought much of Captain de Baron and his story. It was a pity—a thousand pities—that it should be so. It was to be regretted—much regretted—that he had been induced to tell his story. She was angry with herself because she had been indiscreet, and she was still angry—a little angry with him—because he had yielded to the temptation. But there had been something sweet in it. She was sorry, grieved in her heart of hearts that he should love her. She had never striven to gain his love. She had never even thought of it. It ought not to have been so. She should have thought of it; she should not have shown herself to be so pleased with his society. But yet—yet it was sweet. Then there came upon her some memory of her old dreams, before she had been engaged to Lord George. She knew how vain had been those dreams, because she now loved Lord George with her whole heart; but yet she remembered them, and felt as though they had come true with a dreamy half truth. And she brought to mind all those flattering words with which he had spoken her praises—how he had told her that she was an angel, too good and pure to be supposed capable of evil; how he had said that in his castles in the air he would still think of her as his wife. Surely a man may build what castles in the air he pleases, if he will only hold his tongue! She was quite sure that she did not love him, but she was sure also that his was the proper way of making love. And then she thought

of Guss Mildmay. Could she not in pure charity do a good turn to that poor girl? Might she not tell Captain de Baron that it was his duty to marry her, and if he felt it to be his duty would he not do so? It may be doubted whether in these moments she did not think much better of Captain de Baron than that gentleman deserved.

On the next day the Manor Cross carriage came over for her. The Dean had offered to send her, but Lord George had explained that his mother was anxious that the carriage should come. There would be a cart for the luggage. As to Lady George herself, there was a general feeling at Manor Cross that in the present circumstances the family carriage should bring her home. But it came empty. "God bless you, dearest," said the Dean, as he put her into the vehicle.

"Good-bye, papa. I suppose you can come over and see me?"

"I don't know that I can. I saw none of the ladies when I was there yesterday."

"I don't care a bit for the ladies. Where I go, papa, you can come. Of course George will see you, and you could ask for me." The Dean smiled, and kissed her again, and then she was gone.

She hardly knew what grand things were in store for her. She was still rebelling in her heart against skirts and petticoats, and resolving that she would not go to church twice on Sundays unless she liked it, when the carriage drove up to the door. They were all in the hall, all except the Marchioness. "We wouldn't go in," said Lady Amelia, "because we didn't like to fill the carriage."

"And George wanted us to send it early," said

Lady Sarah, "before we had done our work." They all kissed her affectionately, and then she was again in her husband's arms. Mrs. Toff curtsied to her most respectfully. Mary observed the curtsy and reminded herself at the moment that Mrs. Toff had never curtsied to her before. Even the tall footman in knee-breeches stood back with a demeanour which had hitherto been vouchsafed only to the real ladies of the family. Who could tell how soon that wicked Marquis would die; and then—then how great would not be the glory of the Dean's daughter! "Perhaps you won't mind coming up to mamma as soon as you have got your hat off," said Lady Susanna. "Mamma is so anxious to see you." Mary's hat was immediately off, and she declared herself ready to go to the Marchioness. "Mamma has had a great deal to trouble her since you were here," said Lady Susanna, as she led the way upstairs. "She has aged very much. You'll be kind to her, I know."

"Of course I'll be kind," said Mary; "I hope I never was unkind."

"She thinks so much of things now, and then she cries so often. We do all we can to prevent her from crying, because it does make her so weak. Beef-tea is best, we think; and then we try to get her to sleep a good deal.—Mary has come, mamma. Here she is. The carriage has only just arrived." Mary followed Lady Susanna into the room, and the Marchioness was immediately immersed in a flood of tears.

"My darling!" she exclaimed; "my dearest, if anything can ever make me happy again, it is that you should have come back to me." Mary kissed her mother-in-law and submitted to be kissed with a pretty

grace, as though she and the old lady had always been the warmest, most affectionate friends. "Sit down, my love. I have had the easy-chair brought there on purpose for you. Susanna, get her that footstool." Susanna, without moving a muscle of her face, brought the footstool. "Now, sit down, and let me look at you. I don't think she's much changed." This was very distressing to poor Mary, who, with all her desire to oblige the Marchioness, could not bring herself to sit down in the easy-chair. "So that poor little boy has gone, my dear?"

"I was so sorry to hear it."

"Yes, of course. That was quite proper. When anybody dies we ought to be sorry for them. I'm sure I did all I could to make things comfortable for him. Didn't I, Susanna?"

"You were quite anxious about him, mamma."

"So I was—quite anxious. I have no doubt his mother neglected him. I always thought that. But now there will be another, won't there?" This was a question which the mother expectant could not answer, and in order to get over the difficulty Susanna suggested that Mary should be allowed to go down to lunch.

"Certainly, my dear. In her condition she ought not to be kept waiting a minute. And mind, Susanna, she has bottled porter. I spoke about it before. She should have a pint at lunch and a pint at dinner."

"I can't drink porter," said Mary, in despair.

"My dear, you ought to; you ought indeed; you must. I remember as well as if it were yesterday Sir Henry telling me it was the only sure thing. That was before Popenjoy was born—I mean Brotherton. I do so hope it will be a Popenjoy, my dear." This

was the last word said to her as Mary was escaping from the room.

She was not expected to make cloaks and skirts, but she was obliged to fight against a worse servitude even than that. She almost longed for the cloaks and skirts when day after day she was entreated to take her place in the easy-chair by the couch of the Marchioness. There was a cruelty in refusing, but in yielding there was a crushing misery. The Marchioness evidently thought that the future stability of the family depended on Mary's quiescence and capability for drinking beer. Very many lies were necessarily told by all the family. She was made to believe that Mary never got up before eleven; and the doctor, who came to see herself and to whose special care Mary was of course recommended, was induced to say that it was essential that Lady George should be in the open air three hours every day. "You know I'm not in the least ill, mother," Mary said to her one day. Since these new hopes and the necessity for such hopes had come up, the Marchioness had requested that she might be called mother by her daughter-in-law.

"No, my dear, not ill; but I remember as though it were yesterday what Sir Henry said to me when Popenjoy was going to be born. Of course he was Popenjoy when he was born. I don't think they've any physicians like Sir Henry now. I do hope it'll be a Popenjoy."

"But that can't be, mother. You are forgetting."

The old woman thought for awhile, and then remembered the difficulty. "No, not quite at once." Then her mind wandered again. "But if this isn't a Popenjoy, my dear—and it's all in the hands of

God—then the next may be. My three first were all girls; and it was a great trouble; but Sir Henry said the next would be a Popenjoy; and so it was. I hope this will be a Popenjoy, because I might die before the next.” When a week of all this had been endured, Mary in her heart was glad that the sentence of expulsion from Manor Cross still stood against her husband, feeling that six months of reiterated longings for a Popenjoy would kill her and the possible Popenjoy also.

Then came the terrible question of an immediate residence. The month was nearly over, and Lord George had determined that he would go up to town for a few days when the time came. Mary begged to be taken with him, but to this he would not accede, alleging that his sojourn there would only be temporary, till something should be settled. “I am sure,” said Mary, “your brother would dislike my being here worse than you.” That might be true, but the edict, as it had been pronounced, had not been against her. The Marquis had simply ordered that, in event of Lord George remaining in the house, the house and park should be advertised for letting. “George, I think he must be mad,” said Mary.

“He is sane enough to have the control of his own property.”

“If it is let, why shouldn’t you take it?”

“Where on earth should I get the money?”

“Couldn’t we all do it among us?”

“He wouldn’t let it to us; he will allow my mother and sisters to live here for nothing; and I don’t think he has said anything to Mr. Knox about you. But I am to be banished.”

"He must be mad."

"Mad or not, I must go."

"Do—do let me go with you! Do go to the Deanery. Papa will make it all square by coming up to us in London."

"Your father has a right to be in the house in London," said Lord George, with a scowl.

When the month was over he did go up to town, and saw Mr. Knox. Mr. Knox advised him to go back to Manor Cross, declaring that he himself would take no further steps without further orders. He had not had a line from the Marquis. He did not even know where the Marquis was, supposing, however, that he was in his house on the lake, but he did know that the Marchioness was not with him, as separate application had been made to him by her ladyship for money. "I don't think I can do it," said Lord George. Mr. Knox shrugged his shoulders, and again said that he saw no objection. "I should be very slow in advertising, you know," said Mr. Knox.

"But I don't think that I have a right to be in a man's house without his leave. I don't think I am justified in staying there against his will because he is my brother." Mr. Knox could only shrug his shoulders.

He remained up in town doing nothing, doubtful as to where he should go and whither he should take his wife, while she was still at Manor Cross, absolutely in the purple, but still not satisfied with her position. She was somewhat cheered at this time by a high-spirited letter from her friend, Mrs. Jones, written from Killancodlem.

"We are all here," said Mrs. Jones, "and we do so wish you were with us. I have heard of your

condition at last, and of course it would not be fit that you should be amusing yourself with wicked, idle people like us, while all the future of all the Germain is, so to say, in your keeping. How very opportune that that poor boy should have gone just as the other is coming! Mind that you are a good girl and take care of yourself. I daresay all the Germain ladies are looking after you day and night, so that you can't misbehave very much. No more Kappa-kappas for many a long day for you!

"We have got Lord Gibley here. It was such a task! I thought cart-ropes wouldn't have brought him? Now he is as happy as the day is long, and like a tame cat in my hands. I really think he is very much in love with her, and she behaves quite prettily. I took care that Green *père* should come down in the middle of it, and that clenched it. The lover didn't make the least fight when papa appeared, but submitted himself like a sheep to the shearers. I shouldn't have done it if I hadn't known that he wanted a wife, and if I hadn't been sure that she would make a good one. There are some men who never really get on their legs till they're married, and never would get married without a little help. I'm sure he'll bless me, or would do, only he'll think after a bit that he did it all by himself.

"Our friend Jack is with us, behaving very well, but not quite like himself. There are two or three very pretty girls here, but he goes about among them quite like a steady old man. I got him to tell me that he'd seen you at Brotherton, and then he talked a deal of nonsense about the good you'd do when you were Marchioness. I don't see, my dear, why you should do more good than other people. I hope you'll be

gracious to your old friends, and keep a good house, and give nice parties. Try and make other people happy: that's the goodness I believe in. I asked him why you were to be particularly good, and then he talked a deal more nonsense, which I need not repeat.

"I hear very queer accounts about the Marquis. He behaved himself at Rudham almost like anybody else, and walked into dinner like a Christian. They say that he is all alone in Italy, and that he won't see her. I fancy he was more hurt in that little affair than some people will allow. Whatever it was, it served him right. Of course I should be glad to see Lord George come to the throne. I always tell the truth, my dear, about these things. What is the use of lying? I shall be very glad to see Lord George a marquis, and then your Popenjoy will be Popenjoy.

"You remember the Baroness—your Baroness. Oh, the Baroness! She absolutely asked me to let her come to Killancodlem. 'But I hate disabilities and rights,' said I. She gave me to understand that that made no difference. Then I was obliged to tell her that I hadn't a bed left. Any little room would do for her. 'We haven't any little rooms at Killancodlem,' said I; and then I left her.

"Good-bye. Mind you are good and take care of yourself; and, whatever you do, let Popenjoy have a royal godfather."

Then her father came over to see her. At this time Lord George was up in town, and when her father was announced she felt there was no one to help her. If none of the ladies of the family would see her father she never would be gracious to them again. This was the turning-point. She could for-

give them for the old quarrel. She could understand that they might have found themselves bound to take their elder brother's part at first. Then they had quarrelled with her, too. Now they had received her back into their favour. But she would have none of their favours, unless they would take her father with her.

She was sitting at the time in that odious arm-chair in the old lady's room; and, when Mrs. Toff brought in word that the Dean was in the little drawing-room, Lady Susanna was also present. Mary jumped up immediately, and knew that she was blushing. "Oh, I must go down to papa," she said. And away she went.

The Dean was in one of his best humours, and was full of Brotherton news. Mr. Groschut had been appointed to the vicarage of Pugsty, and would leave Brotherton within a month.

"I suppose it's a good living."

"About three hundred a year, I believe. He's been acting not quite on the square with a young lady, and the Bishop made him take it. It was that or nothing." The Dean was quite delighted; and when Mary told him something of her troubles—how impossible she found it to drink bottled porter—he laughed, and bade her be of good cheer, and told her that there were good days coming. They had been there for nearly an hour together, and Mary was becoming unhappy. If her father were allowed to go without some recognition from the family, she would never again be friends with those women. She was beginning to think that she never would be friends again with any of them, when the door opened, and Lady Sarah entered the room.

The greeting was very civil on both sides. Lady Sarah could, if she pleased, be gracious, though she was always a little grand; and the Dean was quite willing to be pleased, if only any effort was made to please him. Lady Sarah hoped that he would stay and dine. He would perhaps excuse the Marchioness, as she rarely now left her room. The Dean could not dine at Manor Cross on that day, and then Lady Sarah asked him to come on the Thursday following.

CHAPTER XXV

MR. KNOX HEARS AGAIN FROM THE MARQUIS

"Do come, papa," said Mary, jumping up and putting her arm round her father's shoulders. She was more than willing to meet them all half-way. She would sit in the arm-chair all the morning and try to drink porter at lunch if they would receive her father graciously. Of course she was bound to her husband. She did not wish not to be bound to him. She was quite sure that she loved her husband with a perfect love. But her marriage happiness could not be complete unless her father was to make a part of the intimate home circle of her life. She was now so animated in her request to him, that her manner told all her little story—not only to him, but to Lady Sarah also.

"I will say do come also," said Lady Sarah, smiling.

Mary looked up at her and saw her smile. "If he were your papa," she said, "you would be as anxious as I am." But she also smiled as she spoke.

"Even though he is not, I am anxious."

"Who could refuse when so entreated? Of course I shall be delighted to come," said the Dean. And so it was settled. Her father was to be again made welcome at Manor Cross, and Mary thought that she could now be happy.

"It was very good of you," she whispered to Lady Sarah, as soon as he had left them. "Of course I understand. I was very, very sorry that he and Lord Brotherton had quarrelled. I won't say anything now

about anybody being wrong or anybody being right. But it would be dreadful to me if papa couldn't come to see me. I don't think you know what he is."

"I do know that you love him very dearly."

"Of course I do. There is nothing on earth he wouldn't do for me. He is always trying to make me happy. And he'd do just as much for George, if George would let him. You've been very good about it, and I love you for it." Lady Sarah was quite open to the charm of being loved. She did not talk much of such things, nor was it compatible with her nature to make many professions of affection. But it would be a happiness to her if this young sister-in-law, who would no doubt sooner or later be the female head of the house, could be taught to love her. So she kissed Mary, and then walked demurely away, conscious that any great display of feeling would be antagonistic to her principles.

During the hour that Mary had been closeted with her father there had been much difficulty among the ladies upstairs about the Dean. The suggestion that he should be asked to dine had of course come from Lady Sarah, and it fell like a little thunderbolt among them. In the first place, what would Brotherton say? Was it not an understood portion of the agreement under which they were allowed to live in the house, that the Dean should not be a guest there? Lady Susanna had even shuddered at his coming to call on his daughter, and they had all thought it to be improper when a short time since he had personally brought the news of Popenjoy's death to the house. And then there was their own resentment as to that affray at Scumberg's. They were probably inclined to agree with Lady Brabazon that Brotherton was not

quite all that he should be; but still he was Brotherton, and the man who had nearly murdered him could not surely be a fit guest at Manor Cross. "I don't think we can do that, Sarah," Lady Susanna had said after a long silence. "Oh, dear! that would be very dreadful!" the Marchioness had exclaimed. Lady Amelia had clasped her hands together and had trembled in every limb. But Lady Sarah, who never made any suggestion without deep thought, was always loath to abandon any that she had made. She clung to this with many arguments. Seeing how unreasonable Brotherton was, they could not feel themselves bound to obey him. As to the house, while their mother lived there it must be regarded as her house. It was out of the question that they should have their guests dictated to them by their brother. Perhaps the Dean was not all that a dean ought to be—but then, who was perfect? George had married his daughter, and it could not be right to separate the daughter from the father. Then came the final, strong, clenching argument. Mary would certainly be disturbed in her mind if not allowed to see her father. Perfect tranquillity for Mary was regarded as the chief ingredient in the cup of prosperity which, after many troubles, was now to be re-brewed for the Germain family. If she were not allowed to see her father, the coming Popenjoy would suffer for it. "You'd better let him come, Susanna," said the Marchioness through her tears. Susanna had looked as stern as an old sibyl. "I really think it will be best," said Lady Amelia. "It ought to be done," said Lady Sarah. "I suppose you had better go to him," said the Marchioness. "I could not see him; indeed I couldn't. But he won't want to see me." Lady Su-

sanna did not yield, but Lady Sarah, as we know, went down on her mission of peace.

Mary, as soon as she was alone, sat herself down to write a letter to her husband. It was then Monday, and her father was to dine there on Thursday. The triumph would hardly be complete unless George would come home to receive him. Her letter was full of arguments, full of entreaties, and full of love. Surely he might come for one night, if he couldn't stay any longer. It would be so much nicer for her father to have a gentleman there. Such an attention would please him so much! "I am sure he would go twice the distance if you were coming to his house," pleaded Mary.

Lord George came, and in a quiet way the dinner was a success. The Dean made himself very agreeable. The Marchioness did not appear, but her absence was attributed to the condition of her health. Lady Sarah, as the great promoter of the festival, was bound to be on her good behaviour, and Lady Amelia endeavoured to copy her elder sister. It was not to be expected that Lady Susanna should be cordially hospitable; but it was known that Lady Susanna was habitually silent in company. Mary could forgive her second sister-in-law's sullenness, understanding, as she did quite well, that she was at this moment triumphing over Lady Susanna. Mr. Groschut was not a favourite with any of the party at Manor Cross, and the Dean made himself pleasant by describing the nature of the late chaplain's promotion. "He begged the Bishop to let him off," said the Dean, "but his lordship was peremptory. It was Pugsty or leave the diocese."

"What had he done, papa?" asked Mary.

"He had promised to marry Hawkins's daughter." Hawkins was the Brotherton bookseller on the Low Church side. "And then he denied the promise. Unfortunately he had written letters, and Hawkins took them to the Bishop. I should have thought Groschut would have been too sharp to write letters."

"But what was all that to the Bishop?" asked Lord George.

"The Bishop was, I think, just a little tired of him. The Bishop is old and meek, and Mr. Groschut thought that he could domineer. He did not quite know his man. The Bishop is old and meek, and would have borne much. When Mr. Groschut scolded him, I fancy that he said nothing. But he bided his time; and, when Mr. Hawkins came, then there was a decision pronounced. It was Pugsty, or nothing."

"Is Pugsty very nasty, papa?"

"It isn't very nice, I fancy. It just borders on the Potteries, and the population is heavy. As he must marry the bookseller's daughter also, the union, I fear, won't be very grateful."

"I don't see why a bishop should send a bad man to any parish," suggested Lady Sarah.

"What is he to do with a Groschut, when he had unfortunately got hold of one? He couldn't be turned out to starve. The Bishop would never have been rid of him. A small living—some such thing as Pugsty—was almost a necessity."

"But the people," said Lady Sarah. "What is to become of the poor people?"

"Let us hope they may like him. At any rate, he will be better at Pugsty than at Brotherton." In this way the evening passed off; and, when at ten

o'clock the Dean took his departure, it was felt by everyone except Lady Susanna that the proper thing had been done.

Lord George, having thus come back to Manor Cross, remained there. He was not altogether happy in his mind; but his banishment seemed to be so absurd a thing that he did not return to London. At Manor Cross there was something for him to do. In London there was nothing. And, after all, there was a question whether, as a pure matter of right, the Marquis had the power to pronounce such a sentence. Manor Cross no doubt belonged to him, but then so also did Cross Hall belong for the time to his mother; and he was receiving the rent of Cross Hall, while his mother was living at Manor Cross. Lady Sarah was quite clear that, for the present, they were justified in regarding Manor Cross as belonging to them. "And who'll tell him when he's all the way out there?" asked Mary. "I never did hear of such a thing in all my life. What harm can you do to the house, George?"

So they went on in peace and quietness for the next three months, during which not a single word was heard from the Marquis. They did not even know where he was, and, under the present circumstances, did not care to ask any questions of Mr. Knox. Lord George had worn out his scruples, and was able to go about his old duties in his old fashion. The Dean had dined there once or twice, and Lord George on one occasion had consented to stay with his wife for a night or two at the Deanery. Things seemed to have fallen back quietly into the old way—as they were before the Marquis with his wife and child had come to disturb them. Of course there

was a great difference in Mary's position. It was not only that she was about to become a mother, but that she would do so in a very peculiar manner. Had not the Marquis taken a wife to himself, there would always have been the probability that he would some day do so. Had there not been an Italian Marchioness and a little Italian Popenjoy, the ladies at Manor Cross would still have given him credit for presenting them with a future marchioness and a future Popenjoy at some future day. Now his turn had, as it were, gone. Another Popenjoy from that side was not to be expected. In consequence of all this Mary was very much exalted. They none of them now wished for another Popenjoy from the elder branch. All their hopes were centred in Mary. To Mary herself this importance had its drawbacks. There was the great porter question still unsettled. The arm-chair with the footstool still was there. And she did not like being told that a mile and a half on the sunny side of the trees was the daily amount of exercise which Sir Henry, nearly half a century ago, had prescribed for ladies in her condition. But she had her husband with her, and could, with him, be gently rebellious and affectionately disobedient. It is a great thing, at any rate, to be somebody. In her early married days she had felt herself to be snubbed as being merely the Dean's daughter. Her present troubles brought a certain balm with them. No one snubbed her now. If she had a mind for arrowroot, Mrs. Toff would make it herself and suggest a thimbleful of brandy in it with her most coaxing words. Cloaks and petticoats she never saw, and she was quite at liberty to stay away from afternoon church if she pleased.

It had been decided, after many discussions on the subject, that she and her husband should go up to town for a couple of months after Christmas, Lady Amelia going with them to look after the porter and arrowroot, and that in March she should be brought back to Manor Cross with a view to her confinement. This had not been conceded to her easily, but it had at last been conceded. She had learned in secret from her father that he would come up to town for a part of the time, and after that she never let the question rest till she had carried her point. The Marchioness had been obliged to confess that, in anticipation of her Popenjoy, Sir Henry had recommended a change from the country to town. She did not probably remember that Sir Henry had done so because she had been very cross at the idea of being kept running down to the country all through May. Mary pleaded that it was no use having a house if she were not allowed to see it, that all her things were in London, and at last declared that it would be very convenient to have the baby born in London. Then the Marchioness saw that a compromise was necessary. It was not to be endured that the future Popenjoy, the future Brotherton, should be born in a little house in Munster Court. With many misgivings it was at last arranged that Mary should go to London on the 18th of January, and be brought back on the 10th of March. After many consultations, computations, and calculations, it was considered that the baby would be born somewhere about the 1st of April.

It may be said that things at Manor Cross were quite in a halcyon condition, when suddenly a thunder-bolt fell among them. Mr. Knox appeared one day

at the house and showed to Lord George a letter from the Marquis. It was written with his usual contempt of all ordinary courtesy of correspondence, but with more than his usual bitterness. It declared the writer's opinion that his brother was a mean fellow, and deserving of no trust in that he had continued to live at the house after having been desired to leave by its owner; and it went on to give peremptory orders to Mr. Knox to take steps for letting the house at once. This took place at the end of the first week in December. Then there was a postscript to the letter in which the Marquis suggested that Mr. Knox had better take a house for the Marchioness, and apply Mr. Price's rent in the payment for such house. "Of course you will consult my mother," said the postscript; "but it should not be anywhere near Brotherton."

There was an impudence as well as a cruelty about this which almost shook the belief which Lord George still held in the position of an elder brother. Mr. Knox was to take a house; as though his mother and sisters had no rights, no freedom of their own! "Of course I will go," said he, almost pale with anger.

Then Mr. Knox explained his views. It was his intention to write back to the Marquis and to decline to execute the task imposed upon him. The care of the Marquis's property was no doubt his chief mainstay; but there were things, he said, which he could not do. Of course the Marquis would employ someone else, and he must look for his bread elsewhere. But he could not, he said, bring himself to take steps for the letting of Manor Cross as long as the Marchioness was living there.

Of course there was a terrible disturbance in the

house. There arose a great question whether the old lady should or should not be told of this new trouble, and it was decided at last that she should for the present be kept in the dark. Mr. Knox was of opinion that the house never would be let, and that it would not be in his lordship's power to turn them out without procuring for them the use of Cross Hall, in which Mr. Price's newly-married bride had made herself comfortable on a lease of three years. And he was also of opinion that the attempt made by the Marquis to banish his brother was a piece of monstrous tyranny to which no attention should be paid. This he said before all the younger ladies; but to Lord George himself he said even more. He expressed a doubt whether the Marquis could be in his right mind, and added a whisper that the accounts of the Marquis's health were very bad indeed. "Of course he could let the house?" asked Lord George.

"Yes, if he can get anybody to let it for him, and anybody else to take it. But I don't think it ever will be let. He won't quite know what to do when he gets my letter. He can hardly change his agent without coming to London, and he won't like to do that in the winter. He'll write me a very savage letter, and then in a week or two I shall answer him. I don't think I'd disturb the Marchioness if I were you, my lord."

The Marchioness was not disturbed, but Lord George again went up to London, on this occasion occupying the house in Munster Court in solitude. His scruples were all renewed, and it was in vain that Lady Sarah repeated to him all Mr. Knox's arguments. He had been called a mean fellow, and the word rankled with him. He walked about alone think-

ing of the absolute obedience with which in early days he had complied with all the behests of his elder brother, and the perfect faith with which in later days he had regarded that brother's interests. He went away swearing to himself that he would never again put his foot within the domain of Manor Cross as long as it was his brother's property. A day might come when he would return there; but Lord George was not a man to anticipate his own prosperity. Mary wished to accompany him; but this was not allowed. The Marchioness inquired a dozen times why he should go away; but there was no one who could tell her.

CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. JONES'S LETTER

A FEW days before Christmas Mary received a long letter from her friend, Mrs. Montacute Jones. At this time there was sad trouble again at Manor Cross. Lord George had been away for a fortnight, and no reason for his departure had as yet been given to the Marchioness. She had now become aware that he was not to be at home at Christmas, and she was full of doubt, full of surmises of her own. He must have quarrelled with his sisters! They all assured her that there hadn't been an unpleasant word between him and any one of them. Then he must have quarrelled with his wife? "Indeed, indeed he has not," said Mary. "He has never quarrelled with me, and he never shall." Then why did he stay away? Business was nonsense. Why was he going to stay away during Christmas? Then it was necessary to tell the old lady a little fib. She was informed that Brotherton had specially desired him to leave the house. This certainly was a fib, as Brotherton's late order had been of a very different nature. "I hope he hasn't done anything to offend his brother again," said the Marchioness. "I wonder whether it's about Popenjoy!" In the midst of her troubles the poor old woman's wits were apt to wander.

Mary, too, had become rather cross, thinking that as her husband was up in town she should be allowed to be there too. But it had been conceded by her,

and by her father on her behalf, that her town life was not to begin till after Christmas, and now she was unable to prevail. She and the family were in this uncomfortable condition when Mrs. Montacute Jones's letter came for her consolation. As it contained tidings more or less accurate, concerning many persons named in this chronicle, it shall be given entire. Mrs. Montacute Jones was a great writer of letters, and she was wont to communicate many details among her friends and acquaintances respecting one another. It was one of the marvels of the day that Mrs. Jones should have so much information; and no one could say how or whence she got it.

“CURRY HALL, December 12, 187—”

Curry Hall was the name of Mr. Jones's seat in Gloucestershire, whereas, as all the world knew, Kilnwood was supposed to belong to Mrs. Jones herself.

“DEAREST LADY GEORGE,—We have been here for the last six weeks, quite quiet. A great deal too quiet for me, but for the three or four winter months I am obliged to give way a little to Mr. Jones. We have had the Mildmays here, because they didn't seem to have any other place to go to. But I barred the Baroness. I am told that she is now bringing an action against Aunt Ju, who unfortunately wrote the letter which induced the woman to come over from—wherever she came from. Poor Aunt Ju is in a terrible state, and wants her brother to buy the woman off—which he will probably have to do. That's what comes, my dear, of meddling with disabilities. I know my own disabilities, but I never think of interfering

with Providence. Mr. Jones was made a man, and I was made a woman. So I put up with it, and I hope you will do the same.

"Mr. and Mrs. Green are here also, and remain till Christmas, when the Giblets are coming. It was the prettiest wedding in the world, and they have been half over Europe since. I am told he's the happiest man in the world, and the very best husband. Old Gossling didn't like it at all, but every stick is entailed, and they say he's likely to have gout in his stomach, so that everything will go pleasantly. Lord Giblet himself is loud against his father, asking everybody whether it was to be expected that in such a matter as that he shouldn't follow his own inclination? I do hope he'll show a little gratitude to me. But it's an ungrateful world, and they'll probably both forget what I did for them.

"And now I want to ask you your opinion about another friend. Don't you think that Jack had better settle down with poor dear Guss? She's here, and upon my word I think she's nearly broken-hearted. Of course you and I know what Jack has been thinking of lately. But when a child cries for the top brick of the chimney, it is better to let him have some possible toy. You know what top brick he has been crying for. But I'm sure you like him, and so do I, and I think we might do something for him. Mr. Jones would let them a nice little house a few miles from here at a peppercorn rent, and I suppose old Mr. Mildmay could do something. They are engaged after a fashion. She told me all about it the other day. So I've asked him to come down for Christmas, and have offered to put up his horses if he wants to hunt.

"And now, my dear, I want to know what you have heard about Lord Brotherton at Manor Cross. Of course we all know the way he has behaved to Lord George. If I were Lord George I should not pay the slightest attention to him. But I'm told he is in a very low condition—never sees anybody except his courier, and never stirs out of the house. Of course you know that he makes his wife an allowance, and refuses to see her. From what I hear privately, I really do think that he'll not last long. What a blessing it would be! That's plain speaking; but it would be a blessing! Some people manage to live so that everybody will be the better for their dying. I should break my heart if anybody wanted me to die.

"How grand it would be! The young and lovely Marchioness of Brotherton! I'll be bound you think about it less than anybody else, but it would be nice. I wonder whether you'd cut a poor old woman like me, without a handle to her name. And then it would be Popenjoy at once! Only how the bonfires wouldn't burn if it should turn out to be only a disability after all! But we should say, better luck next time, and send you caudle-cups by the dozen. Who wouldn't send a caudle-cup to a real young lovely live Marchioness? I'll be bound your father knows all about it, and has counted it all up a score of times. I suppose it's over forty thousand pounds a year since they took to working the coal at Popenjoy, and whatever the present man has done he can't have clipped the property. He has never gambled, and never spent his income. Italian wives and that sort of thing don't cost so much as they do in England.

"Pray write and tell me all about it. I shall be

in town in February, and of course shall see you. I tell Mr. Jones that I can't stand Curry Hall for more than three months. He won't come to town till May, and perhaps when May comes he'll have forgotten all about it. He is very fond of sheep, but I don't think he cares for anything else, unless he has a slight taste for pigs.

"Your affectionate friend,

"G. MONTACUTE JONES."

There was much in this letter that astonished Mary, something that shocked her, but something also that pleased her. The young and lovely Marchioness of Brotherton! Where is the woman who would not like to be a young and lovely Marchioness, so that it had all been come by honestly, that the husband had been married as husbands ought to be married, and had not been caught like Lord Gible? And she knew that her old friend—her old friend whom she had not yet known for quite twelve months—was only joking with her in that suggestion as to being cut. What a fate was this in store for her—if it really was in store—that so early in her life she should be called upon to fill so high a place. Then she made some resolutions in her mind that should it be so she would be humble and meek; and a further resolution that she would set her heart upon none of it till it was firmly her own.

But it shocked her that the Marquis should be so spoken of, especially that he should be so spoken of if he were really dying! Plain speaking! Yes, indeed. But such plain speaking was very terrible. This old woman could speak of another nobleman having gout in his stomach as though that were a

thing really to be desired. And then that allusion to the Italian wife or wives! Poor Mary blushed as she thought of it.

But there was a paragraph in the letter which interested her as much as the tidings respecting Lord Brotherton. Could it be right that Jack de Baron should be made to marry Guss Mildmay? She thought not, for she knew that he did not love Guss Mildmay. That he should have wanted an impossible brick, whether the highest or lowest brick, was very sad. When children cry for impossible bricks they must of course be disappointed. But she hardly thought that this would be the proper cure for his disappointment. There had been a moment in which the same idea had suggested itself to her; but now, since her friendship with Jack had been strengthened by his conduct in the Deanery garden, she thought that he might do better with himself than be made by Mrs. Jones to marry Guss Mildmay. Of course she could not interfere, but she hoped that something might prevent Jack de Baron from spending his Christmas at Curry Hall. She answered Mrs. Jones's letter very prettily. She trusted that Lord Giblet might be happy with his wife, even though his father should get well of the gout. She was very sorry to hear that Lord Brotherton was ill. Nothing was known about him at Manor Cross, except that he seemed to be very ill-natured to everybody. She was surprised that anybody should be so ill-natured as he was. If ever she should live to fill a high position she hoped she would be good-natured. She knew that the people she would like best would be those who had been kind to her, and nobody had been so kind as a certain lady named Mrs. Montacute Jones. Then she spoke of

her coming trial. "Don't joke with me about it any more, there's a dear woman. They all flutter me here, talking of it always, though they mean to be kind. But it seems to me so serious. I wish that nobody would speak to me of it except George, and he seems to think nothing about it."

Then she came to the paragraph the necessity for writing which had made her answer Mrs. Jones's letter so speedily. "I don't think you ought to persuade anybody to marry anyone. It didn't much signify, perhaps, with Lord Giblet, as he isn't clever, and I daresay that Miss Green will suit him very well; but, as a rule, I think gentlemen should choose for themselves. In the case you speak of, I don't think he cares for her, and then they would be unhappy." She would not for worlds have mentioned Captain de Baron's name; but she thought that Mrs. Jones would understand her.

Of course Mrs. Jones understood her—had understood more than Mary had intended her to understand. Christmas was over and Mary was up in town when she received Mrs. Jones's rejoinder, but it may as well be given here. "The child who wanted the top brick is here, and I think will content himself with a very much less exalted morsel of the building. I am older than you, my dear, and know better. Our friend is a very good fellow in his way, but there is no reason why he should not bend his neck as well as another. To you, no doubt, he seems to have many graces. He has had the great grace of holding his tongue because he appreciated your character." Mary, as she read this, knew that even Mrs. Montacute Jones could be misinformed now and then. "But I do not know that he is in truth more gracious than

others, and I think it quite as well that Miss Mildmay should have the reward of her constancy."

But this was after Christmas, and in the meantime other occurrences had taken place. On the 20th of December Lord George was informed by Mr. Knox that his brother, who was then at Naples, had been struck by paralysis, and at Mr. Knox's advice he started off for the southern capital of Italy. The journey was a great trouble to him, but this was a duty which he would under no circumstances neglect. The tidings were communicated to Manor Cross, and after due consultation, were conveyed by Lady Sarah to her mother. The poor old lady did not seem to be made very unhappy by them. "Of course I can't go to him," she said; "how could I do it?" When she was told that that was out of the question she subsided again into tranquillity, merely seeming to think it necessary to pay increased attention to Mary; for she was still quite alive to the fact that all this greatly increased the chances that the baby would be Popenjoy; but even in this the poor old lady's mind wandered much, for every now and then she would speak of Popenjoy as though there were a living Popenjoy at the present moment.

Lord George hurried off to Naples, and found that his brother was living at a villa about eight miles from the town. He learned in the city, before he had made his visit, that the Marquis was better, having recovered his speech and apparently the use of his limbs. Still, being at Naples, he found himself bound to go out to the villa. He did so, and when he was there his brother refused to see him. He endeavoured to get what information he could from the doctor; but the doctor was an Italian, and Lord

George could not understand him. As far as he could learn, the doctor thought badly of the case; but for the present his patient had so far recovered as to know what he was about. Then Lord George hurried back to London, having had a most uncomfortable journey in the snow. Come what might, he didn't think that he would ever again take the trouble to pay a visit to his brother. The whole time taken on his journey and for his sojourn in Naples was less than three weeks, and when he returned the new year had commenced.

He went down to Brotherton to bring his wife up to London, but met her at the Deanery, refusing to go to the house. When the Marchioness heard of this—and it became impossible to keep it from her—she declared that it was with herself that her son George must have quarrelled. Then it was necessary to tell the whole truth, or nearly the whole. Brotherton had behaved so badly to his brother that Lord George had refused to enter even the park. The poor old woman was very wretched, feeling in some dim way that she was being robbed of both her sons. "I don't know what I've done," she said, "that everything should be like this. I'm sure I did all I could for them; but George never would behave properly to his elder brother, and I don't wonder that Brotherton feels it. Brotherton always had so much feeling. I don't know why George should be jealous because Popenjoy was born. Why shouldn't his elder brother have a son of his own like anybody else?" And yet whenever she saw Mary, which she did for two or three hours every day, she was quite alive to the coming interest. It was suggested to her that she should be driven into Brotherton, so that she might

see George at the Deanery; but her objection to go to the Dean's house was as strong as was that of Lord George to come to his brother's.

Mary was, of course, delighted when the hour of her escape came. It had seemed to her that there was especial cruelty in keeping her at Manor Cross while her husband was up in town. Her complaints on this head had of course been checked by her husband's unexpected journey to Naples, as to which she had hardly heard the full particulars till she found herself in the train with him. "After going all that way he wouldn't see you!"

"He neither would see me or send me any message."

"Then he must be a bad man."

"He has lived a life of self-indulgence till he doesn't know how to control a thought or passion. It was something of that kind which was meant when we were told about the rich man and the eye of the needle."

"But you will be a rich man soon, George."

"Don't think of it, Mary; don't anticipate it. God knows I have never longed for it. Your father longs for it."

"Not for his own sake, George."

"He is wrong all the same. It will not make you happier—nor me."

"But, George, when you thought that that little boy was not Popenjoy, you were as anxious as papa to find it all out."

"Right should be done," said Lord George after a pause. "Whether it be for weal or woe, justice should have its way. I never wished that the child should be other than what he was called; but when

there seemed to be reason for doubt I thought that it should be proved."

"It will certainly come to you now, George, I suppose."

"Who can say? I might die to-night, and then Dick Germain, who is a sailor somewhere, would be the next Lord Brotherton."

"Don't talk like that, George."

"He would be if your child happened to be a girl. And Brotherton might live ever so long. I have been so harassed by it all that I am almost sick of the title and sick of the property. I never grudged him anything, and see how he has treated me." Then Mary was very gracious to him and tried to comfort him, and told him that fortune had at any rate given him a loving wife.

CHAPTER XXVII

BACK IN LONDON

MARY was fond of her house in Munster Court. It was her own; and her father and Miss Tallowax between them had enabled her to make it very pretty. The married woman who has not some pet lares of her own is but a poor woman. Mary worshipped her little household gods with a perfect religion, and was therefore happy in being among them again; but she was already beginning to feel that in a certain event she would be obliged to leave Munster Court. She knew that as Marchioness of Brotherton she would not be allowed to live there. There was a large brick house, with an unbroken row of six windows on the first floor, in St. James's Square, which she already knew as the town house of the Marquis of Brotherton. It was, she thought, by far the most gloomy house in the whole square. It had been uninhabited for years, the present Marquis having neither resided there nor let it. Her husband had never spoken to her about the house—had never, as far as she could remember, been with her in St. James's Square. She had inquired about it of her father, and he had once taken her through the square, and had shown her the mansion. But that had been in the days of the former Popenjoy, when she, at any rate, had never thought that the dreary-looking mansion would make or mar her own comfort. Now

there had arisen a question of a delicate nature on which she had said a word or two to her husband in her softest whisper. Might not certain changes be made in the house at Munster Court in reference to—well, a nursery. A room to be baby's own she had called it. She had thus made herself understood, though she had not said the word which seemed to imply a plural number. "But you'll be down at Manor Cross," said Lord George.

"You don't mean to keep me there always?"

"No, not always; but when you come back to London it may be to another house."

"You don't mean St. James's Square?" But that was just what he did mean. "I hope we shan't have to live in that prison."

"It's one of the best houses in London," said Lord George, with a certain amount of family pride. "It used to be, at least, before the rich tradesmen had built all those palaces at South Kensington."

"It's dreadfully dingy."

"Because it has not been painted lately. Brotherton has never done anything like anybody else."

"Couldn't we keep this and let that place?"

"Not very well. My father and my grandfather, and great-grandfather lived there. I think we had better wait a bit and see." Then she felt sure that the glory was coming. Lord George would never have spoken of her living in St. James's Square had he not felt almost certain that it would soon come about.

Early in February her father came to town, and he was quite certain. "The poor wretch can't speak articulately," he said.

"Who says so, papa?"

"I have taken care to find out the truth. What a life! And what a death! He is there all alone. Nobody ever sees him but an Italian doctor. If it's a boy, my dear, he will be my lord as soon as he's born; or, for the matter of that, if it's a girl she will be my lady."

"I wish it wasn't so."

"You must take it all as God sends it, Mary."

"They've talked about it till I'm sick of it," said Mary angrily. Then she checked herself and added: "I don't mean you, papa; but at Manor Cross they all flatter me now because that poor man is dying. If you were me you wouldn't like that."

"You've got to bear it, my dear. It's the way of the world. People at the top of the tree are always flattered. You can't expect that Mary Lovelace and the Marchioness of Brotherton will be treated in the same way."

"Of course it made a difference when I was married."

"But suppose you had married a curate in the neighbourhood?"

"I wish I had," said Mary wildly, "and that someone had given him the living of Pugsty." But it all tended in the same direction. She began to feel now that it must be, and must be soon. She would, she told herself, endeavour to do her duty; she would be loving to all who had been kind to her, and kind even to those who had been unkind. To all of them at Manor Cross she would be a real sister—even to Lady Susanna, whom certainly she had **not** latterly loved. She would forgive everybody—**except one**. Adelaide Houghton she never could forgive, but Adelaide Houghton should be her only enemy. It did

not occur to her that Jack de Baron had been very nearly as wicked as Adelaide Houghton. She certainly did not intend that Jack de Baron should be one of her enemies.

When she had been in London about a week or two Jack de Baron came to see her. She knew that he had spent his Christmas at Curry Hall, and she knew that Guss Mildmay had also been there. That Guss Mildmay should have accepted such an invitation was natural enough, but she thought that Jack had been very foolish. Why should he have gone to the house when he had known that the girl whom he had promised to marry, but whom he did not intend to marry, was there? And now what was to be the result? She did not think that she could ask him; but she was almost sure that he would tell her.

"I suppose you've been hunting?" she asked.

"Yes; they put up a couple of horses for me, or I couldn't have afforded it."

"She is so good-natured."

"Mrs. Jones! I should think she was; but I'm not quite sure that she intended to be very good-natured to me."

"Why not?" Mary, of course, understood it all; but she could not pretend to understand it, at any rate as yet.

"Oh, I don't know. It was all fair, and I won't complain. She had got Miss Green off her hands, and therefore she wanted something to do. I'm going to exchange, Lady George, into an Indian regiment."

"You're not in earnest?"

"Quite in earnest. My wing will be at Aden, at

the bottom of the Red Sea, for the next year or two. Aden, I'm told, is a charming place."

"I thought it was hot."

"I like hot places; and as I have got rather sick of society I shall do very well there, because there's none. A fellow can't spend any money, except in soda and brandy. I suppose I shall take to drink."

"Don't talk of yourself in that horrid way, Captain de Baron."

"It won't much matter to anyone, for I don't suppose I shall ever come back again. There's a place called Perim, out in the middle of the sea, which will just suit me. They only send one officer there at a time, and there isn't another soul in the place."

"How dreadful!"

"I shall apply to be left there for five years. I shall get through all my troubles by that time."

"I am sure you won't go at all."

"Why not?"

"Because you have got so many friends here."

"Too many, Lady George. Of course you know what Mrs. Jones has been doing?"

"What has she been doing?"

"She tells you everything, I fancy. She has got it all cut and dry. I'm to be married next May, and am to spend the honeymoon at Curry Hall. Of course I'm to leave the army and put the value of my commission into the Three per Cents. Mr. Jones is to let me have a place called Clover Cottage, down in Gloucestershire, and, I believe, I'm to take a farm and be churchwarden of the parish. After paying my debts we shall have about two hundred a year, which of course will be ample for Clover Cottage. I don't exactly see how I'm to spend my evenings, but

I suppose that will come. It's either that or Perim. Which would you advise?"

"I don't know what I ought to say."

"Of course I might cut my throat."

"I wish you wouldn't talk in that way. If it's all a joke I'll take it as a joke."

"It's no joke at all; it's very serious. Mrs. Jones wants me to marry Guss Mildmay."

"And you are engaged to her?"

"Only on certain conditions—which conditions are almost impossible."

"What did you say to—Miss Mildmay at Curry Hall?"

"I told her I should go to Perim."

"And what did she say?"

"Like a brick, she offered to go with me, just as the girl offered to eat the potato parings when the man said that there would not be potatoes enough for both. Girls always say that kind of thing, though, when they are taken at their words, they want bonnets and gloves and fur cloaks."

"And you are going to take her?"

"Not unless I decide upon Clover Cottage. No; if I do go to Perim I think I shall manage to go alone."

"If you don't love her, Captain de Baron, don't marry her."

"There's Giblet doing very well, you know; and I calculate I could spend a good deal of my time at Curry Hall. Perhaps, if we made ourselves useful, they would ask us to Killancodlem. I should manage to be a sort of factotum to old Jones. Don't you think it would suit me?"

"You can't be serious about it."

"Upon my soul, Lady George, I never was so serious in my life. Do you think that I mean nothing because I laugh at myself? You know I don't love her."

"Then say so and have done with it."

"That is so easy to suggest, but so impossible to do. How is a man to tell a girl that he doesn't love her after such an acquaintance as I have had with Guss Mildmay? I have tried to do so, but I couldn't do it. There are men, I believe, hard enough for that; and things are changed now, and the affectation of chivalry has gone by. Women ask men to marry them, and the men laugh and refuse."

"Don't say that, Captain de Baron."

"I'm told that's the way the thing is done now; but I've no strength myself, and I'm not up to it. I'm not at all joking. I think I shall exchange and go away. I've brought my pigs to a bad market, but as far as I can see that is the best that is left for me." Mary could only say that his friends would be very—very sorry to lose him, but that in her opinion anything would be better than marrying a girl whom he did not love.

Courtesies at this time were showered upon Lady George from all sides. Old Lady Brabazon, to whom she had hardly spoken, wrote to her at great length. Mrs. Patmore Green came to her on purpose to talk about her daughter's marriage. "We are very much pleased of course," said Mrs. Green. "It was altogether a love affair, and the young people are so fond of each other! I do so hope you and she will be friends. Of course her position is not so brilliant as yours, but still it is very good. Poor dear Lord Gossling"—whom, by-the-bye, Mrs. Patmore Green

had never seen—"is failing very much; he is a martyr to the gout, and then he is so imprudent."

Lady Mary smiled and was civil, but did not make any promise of peculiarly intimate friendship. Lady Selina Protest came to her with a long story of her wrongs, and a petition that she would take the Flea-body side in the coming contest. It was in vain that she declared that she had no opinion whatsoever as to the rights of women; a marchioness, she was told, would be bound to have opinions, or, at any rate, would be bound to subscribe.

But the courtesy which surprised and annoyed her most was a visit from Adelaide Houghton. She came up to London for a week about the end of February, and had the hardihood to present herself at the house in Munster Court. This was an insult which Mary had by no great means expected; she had therefore failed to guard herself against it by any special instructions to her servant. And thus Mrs. Houghton, the woman who had written love-letters to her husband, was shown up into her drawing-room before she had the means of escaping. When the name was announced she felt that she was trembling. There came across her a feeling that she was utterly incapable of behaving properly in such an emergency. She knew that she blushed up to the roots of her hair. She got up from her seat as she heard the name announced, and then seated herself again before her visitor had entered the room. She did resolve that nothing on earth should induce her to shake hands with the woman. "My dear Lady George," said Mrs. Houghton, hurrying across the room, "I hope you will let me explain."

She had half put out her hand, but had done so

in a manner which allowed her to withdraw it without seeming to have had the overture refused.

"I do not know that there is anything to explain," said Mary.

"You will let me sit down?" Mary longed to refuse; but, not quite daring to do so, simply bowed—upon which Mrs. Houghton did sit down. "You are very angry with me, it seems?"

"Well—yes, I am."

"And yet what harm have I done you?"

"None in the least—none at all. I never thought that you could do me any harm."

"Is it wise, Lady George, to give importance to a little trifle?"

"I don't know what you call a trifle."

"I had known him before you did; and, though it had not suited me to become his wife, I had always liked him. Then the intimacy sprang up again; but what did it amount to? I believe you read some foolish letter?"

"I did read a letter, and I was perfectly sure that my husband had done nothing, I will not say to justify, but even to excuse the writing of it. I am quite aware, Mrs. Houghton, that it was all on one side."

"Did he say so?"

"You must excuse me if I decline altogether to tell you what he said."

"I am sure he did not say that. But what is the use of talking of it at all? Is it necessary, Lady George, that you and I should quarrel about such a thing as that?"

"Quite necessary, Mrs. Houghton."

"Then you must be very fond of quarrelling."

"I never quarrelled with anybody else in my life."

"When you remember how near we are to each other in the country—— I will apologise if you wish it."

"I will remember nothing, and I want no apology. To tell you the truth, I really think that you ought not to have come here."

"It is childish, Lady George, to make so much of it."

"It may be nothing to you. It is a great deal to me. You must excuse me if I say that I really cannot talk to you any more." Then she got up and walked out of the room, leaving Mrs. Houghton among her treasures. In the dining-room she rang the bell and told the servant to open the door when the lady upstairs came down. After a very short pause, the lady upstairs did come down, and walked out to her carriage with an unabashed demeanour.

After much consideration, Lady George determined that she must tell her husband what had occurred. She was aware that she had been very uncourteous, and was not sure whether in her anger she had not been carried farther than became her. Nothing could, she thought, shake her in her determination to have no further friendly intercourse of any kind with the woman. Not even were her husband to ask her would that be possible. Such a request from him would be almost an insult to her. And no request from anyone else could have any strength, as no one else knew the circumstances of the case. It was not likely that he would have spoken of it—and of her own silence she was quite sure. But how had it come to pass that the woman had had the face to come to her? Could it be that Lord George had instigated her to do so? She never made inquiries of her husband as to where

he went and whom he saw. For aught that she knew, he might be in Berkeley Square every day. Then she called to mind Mrs. Houghton's face, with the paint visible on it in the broad day, and her blackened eyebrows, and her great crested helmet of false hair nearly eighteen inches deep, and her affected voice and false manner—and then she told herself that it was impossible that her husband should like such a creature.

"George," she said to him abruptly, as soon as he came home, "who do you think has been here? Mrs. Houghton has been here." Then came that old frown across his brow; but she did not know at first whether it was occasioned by anger against herself or against Mrs. Houghton. "Don't you think it was very unfortunate?"

"What did she say?"

"She wanted me to be friends with her."

"And what did you say?"

"I was very rude to her. I told her that I would never have anything to do with her; and then I left the room, so that she had to get out of the house as she could. Was I not right? You don't want me to know her, do you?"

"Certainly not."

"And I was right."

"Quite right. She must be a very hardened woman."

"Oh, George, dear George! You have made me so happy!" Then she jumped up and threw her arms round him. "I never doubted you for a moment—never, never; but I was afraid you might have thought—I don't know what I was afraid of, but I was a fool. She is a nasty hardened creature, and

I do hate her. Don't you see how she covers herself with paint?"

"I haven't seen her for the last three months."

Then she kissed him again and again, foolishly betraying her past fears. "I am almost sorry I bothered you by telling you, only I didn't like to say nothing about it. It might have come out, and you would have thought it odd. How a woman can be so nasty I cannot imagine. But I will never trouble you by talking of her again. Only I have told James that she is not to be let into the house."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LAST OF THE BARONESS

AT this time Dr. Olivia Q. Fleabody had become quite an institution in London. She had obtained full, though by no means undisputed, possession of the great hall in the Marylebone Road, and was undoubtedly for the moment the Queen of the Disabilities. She lectured twice a week to crowded benches. A seat on the platform on these occasions was considered by all high-minded women to be an honour, and the body of the building was always filled by strongly-visaged spinsters and mutinous wives, who twice a week were worked up by Dr. Fleabody to a full belief that a glorious era was at hand in which women would be chosen by constituencies, would wag their heads in courts of law, would buy and sell in Capel Court, and have balances at their bankers'. It was certainly the case that Dr. Fleabody had made proselytes by the hundred, and disturbed the happiness of many fathers of families.

It may easily be conceived that all this was gall and wormwood to the Baroness Banmann. The Baroness, on her arrival in London, had anticipated the success which this low-bred American female had achieved. It was not simply the honour of the thing—which was very great, and would have been very dear to the Baroness—but the American doctor was making a rapid fortune out of the proceeds of the hall.

She had on one occasion threatened to strike lec-

turing unless she were allowed a very large percentage on the sum taken at the doors, and the stewards and directors of the institute had found themselves compelled to give way to her demands. She had consequently lodged herself magnificently at the Langham Hotel, had set up her brougham, in which she always had herself driven to the institute, and was asked out to dinner three or four times a week; whereas the Baroness was in a very poor condition. She had indeed succeeded in getting herself invited to Mr. de Baron's house, and from time to time raised a little money from those who were unfortunate enough to come in her way. But she was sensible of her own degradation, and at the same time quite assured that, as a preacher on woman's rights at large, she could teach lessons infinitely superior to anything that had come from that impudent but imbecile American.

She had undoubtedly received overtures from the directors of the Institute, of whom poor Aunt Ju had for the moment been the spokeswoman, and in these overtures it had been intimated to her that the directors would be happy to remunerate her for her trouble should the money collected at the hall enable them to do so. The Baroness believed that enormous sums had been received, and was loud in assuring all her friends that this popularity had in the first place been produced by her own exertions. At any rate she was resolved to seek redress at law, and at last had been advised to proceed conjointly against Aunt Ju, Lady Selina Protest, and the bald-headed old gentleman. The business had now been brought into proper form, and the trial was to take place in March.

All this was the cause of much trouble to poor Mary, and of very great vexation to Lord George. When the feud was first becoming furious, an enormous advertisement was issued by Dr. Fleabody's friends, in which her cause was advocated, and her claims recapitulated. And to this was appended a list of the nobility, gentry, and people of England who supported the disabilities generally, and her cause in particular. Among these names, which were very numerous, appeared that of Lady George Germain. This might probably have escaped both her notice and her husband's had not the paper been sent to her, with usual friendly zeal, by old Lady Brabazon. "Oh, George," she said, "look here. What right have they to say so? I never patronised anything. I went there once when I came to London first, because Miss Mildmay asked me."

"You should not have gone," said he.

"We have had all that before, and you need not scold me again. There couldn't be any great harm in going to hear a lecture." This occurred just previous to her going down to Manor Cross—that journey which was to be made for so important an object.

Then Lord George did—just what he ought not to have done. He wrote an angry letter to Miss Fleabody, as he called her, complaining bitterly of the insertion of his wife's name. Dr. Fleabody was quite clever enough to make fresh capital out of this. She withdrew the name, explaining that she had been ordered to do so by the lady's husband, and implying that thereby additional evidence was supplied that the Disabilities of Women were absolutely crushing to the sex in England. Mary, when she saw this—

and the paper did not reach her till she was at Manor Cross—was violent in her anxiety to write herself, in her own name, and disclaim all disabilities; but her husband by this time had been advised to have nothing further to do with Dr. Fleabody, and Mary was forced to keep her indignation to herself.

But worse than this followed the annoyance of the advertisement. A man came all the way down from London for the purpose of serving Lady George with a subpoena to give evidence at the trial on the part of the Baroness. Lord George was up in London at the time, never having entered the house at Manor Cross, or even the park, since his visit to Italy. The consternation of the ladies may be imagined. Poor Mary was certainly not in a condition to go into a court of law, and would be less so on the day fixed for the trial. And yet this awful document seemed to her and to her sisters-in-law to be so imperative as to admit of no escape. It was in vain that Lady Sarah, with considerable circumlocution, endeavoured to explain to the messenger the true state of the case. The man could simply say that he was only a messenger, and had now done his work. Looked at in any light, the thing was very terrible. Lord George might probably even yet be able to run away with her to some obscure corner of the Continent in which messengers from the Queen's judges would not be able to find her; and she might perhaps bear the journey without injury. But then what would become of a baby—perhaps of a Popenjoy—so born? There were many who still thought that the Marquis would go before the baby came; and, in that case, the baby would at once be a Popenjoy. What a condition was this for a Marchioness

to be in at the moment of the birth of her eldest child! "But I don't know anything about the nasty woman!" said Mary, through her tears.

"It is such a pity that you should ever have gone," said Lady Susanna, shaking her head.

"It wasn't wicked to go," said Mary, "and I won't be scolded about it any more. You went to a lecture yourself when you were in town, and they might just as well have sent for you."

Lady Sarah promised her that she should not be scolded, and was very keen in thinking what steps had better be taken. Mary wished to run off to the Deanery at once, but was told that she had better not do so till an answer had come to the letter which was of course written by that day's post to Lord George. There were still ten days to the trial, and twenty days, by computation, to the great event. There were, of course, various letters written to Lord George. Lady Sarah wrote very sensibly, suggesting that he should go to Mr. Stokes, the family lawyer. Lady Susanna was full of the original sin of that unfortunate visit to the Disabilities. She was, however, of opinion that if Mary was concealed in a certain room at Manor Cross, which might, she thought, be sufficiently warmed and ventilated for health, the judges of the Queen's Bench would never be able to find her. The baby in that case would have been born at Manor Cross, and posterity would know nothing about the room. Mary's letter was almost hysterically miserable. She knew nothing about the horrid people. What did they want her to say? All she had done was to go to a lecture, and to give the wicked woman a guinea. Wouldn't George come and take her away? She wouldn't care where she went. Nothing on earth

should make her go up and stand before the judges. It was, she said, very cruel, and she did hope that George would come to her at once. If he didn't come she thought that she would die.

Nothing, of course, was said to the Marchioness, but it was found impossible to keep the matter from Mrs. Toff. Mrs. Toff was of opinion that the bit of paper should be burned, and that no further notice should be taken of the matter at all. "If they don't go they has to pay ten pounds," said Mrs. Toff with great authority—Mrs. Toff remembering that a brother of hers, who had "forgotten himself in liquor" at the Brotherton assizes, had been fined ten pounds for not answering to his name as a juryman. "And then they don't really have to pay it," said Mrs. Toff, who remembered also that the good-natured judge had not at last exacted the penalty. But Lady Sarah could not look at the matter in that light. She was sure that if a witness were really wanted, that witness could not escape by paying a fine.

The next morning there came a heartrending letter from Aunt Ju. She was very sorry that Lady George should have been so troubled—but then let them think of her trouble, of her misery! She was quite sure that it would kill her—and it would certainly ruin her. That odious Baroness had summoned everybody that had ever befriended her. Captain de Baron had been summoned, and the Marquis, and Mrs. Montacute Jones. And the whole expense, according to Aunt Ju, would fall upon her; for it seemed to be the opinion of the lawyers that she had hired the Baroness. Then she said some very severe things against the Disabilities generally. There was that woman Fleabody making a fortune

in their hall, and would take none of this expense upon herself. She thought that such things should be left to men, who after all were not so mean as women—so, at least, said Aunt Ju.

And then there was new cause for wonderment. Lord Brotherton had been summoned, and would Lord Brotherton come? They all believed that he was dying, and, if so, surely he could not be made to come. "But is it not horrible," said Lady Susanna, "that people of rank should be made subject to such an annoyance? If anybody can summon anybody, nobody can ever be sure of herself!"

On the next morning Lord George himself came down to Brotherton, and Mary, with a carriageful of precautions, was sent into the Deanery to meet him. The Marchioness discovered that the journey was to be made, and was full of misgivings and full of inquiries. In her present condition, the mother-expectant ought not to be allowed to make any journey at all. The Marchioness remembered how Sir Henry had told her, before Popenjoy was born, that all carriage exercise was bad. And why should she go to the Deanery? Who could say whether the Dean would let her come away again? What a feather it would be in the Dean's cap if the next Popenjoy were born at the Deanery. It was explained to her that in no other way could she see her husband. Then the poor old woman was once more loud in denouncing the misconduct of her youngest son to the head of the family.

Mary made the journey in perfect safety, and then was able to tell her father the whole story. "I never heard of anything so absurd in my life," said the Dean.

"I suppose I must go, papa?"

"Not a yard."

"But won't they come and fetch me?"

"Fetch you? No."

"Does it mean nothing?"

"Very little. They won't attempt to examine half the people they have summoned. That Baroness probably thinks that she will get money out of you. If the worst comes to the worst, you must send a medical certificate."

"Will that do?"

"Of course it will. When George is here we will get Dr. Lofty, and he will make it straight for us. You need not trouble yourself about it at all. Those women at Manor Cross are old enough to have known better."

Lord George came and was very angry. He quite agreed as to Dr. Lofty, who was sent for, and who did give a certificate—and who took upon himself to assure Lady George that all the judges in the land could not enforce her attendance as long as she had that certificate in her hands. But Lord George was vexed beyond measure that his wife's name should have been called in question, and could not refrain himself from a cross word or two. "It was so imprudent your going to such a place!"

"Oh, George, are we to have that all again?"

"Why shouldn't she have gone?" asked the Dean.

"Are you in favour of rights of women?"

"Not particularly—though, if there be any rights which they haven't got, I thoroughly wish that they might get them. I certainly don't believe in the Baroness Banmann, nor yet in Dr. Fleabody; but I don't think there could have been wrong in going in good

company to hear what a crazy old woman might have to say."

"It was very foolish," said Lord George. "See what has come of it!"

"How could I tell, George? I thought you had promised that you wouldn't scold any more. Nasty fat old woman! I'm sure I didn't want to hear her." Then Lord George went back to town with the medical certificate in his pocket, and Mary, being in her present condition, afraid of the authorities, was unable to stay and be happy even for one evening with her father.

During the month the Disabilities created a considerable interest throughout London, of which Dr. Fleabody reaped the full advantage. The Baroness was so loud in her clamours that she forced the question of the Disabilities on the public mind generally, and the result was that the world flocked to the Institute. The Baroness, as she heard of this, became louder and louder. It was not this that she wanted. Those who wished to sympathise with her should send her money—not go to the hall to hear that loud imbecile American female! The Baroness, when she desired to be-little the doctor, always called her a female. And the Baroness, though in truth she was not personally attractive, did contrive to surround herself with supporters, and in these days moved into comfortable lodgings in Wigmore Street. Very few were heard to speak in her favour, but they who contributed to the relief of her necessities were many. It was found to be almost impossible to escape from her without leaving some amount of money in her hands. And then, in a happy hour, she came at last across an old gentleman who did appreciate her and

her wrongs. How it was that she got an introduction to Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs was not, I think, ever known. It is not improbable that, having heard of his soft heart, his peculiar propensities, and his wealth, she contrived to introduce herself. It was, however, suddenly understood that Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs, who was a bachelor and very rich, had taken her by the hand, and intended to bear all the expenses of the trial. It was after the general intimation which had been made to the world in this matter that the summons for Lady Mary had been sent down to Manor Cross.

And now in these halcyon days of March the Baroness also had her brougham and was to be seen everywhere. How she did work! The attorneys who had the case in hand found themselves unable to secure themselves against her. She insisted on seeing the barristers, and absolutely did work her way into the chambers of that discreet junior Mr. Stufenruff. She was full of her case, full of her coming triumph. She would teach women like Miss Julia Mildmay and Lady Selina Protest what it was to bamboozle a Baroness of the Holy Roman Empire! And as for the American female——

"You'll put her pipe out," suggested Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs, who was not superior to a mild joke.

"Stop her from piping altogether in this country," said the Baroness, who in the midst of her wrath and zeal and labour was superior to all jokes.

Two days before that fixed for the trial there fell a great blow upon those who were interested in the matter—a blow that was heavy on Mr. Cœlebs, but heavier still on the attorneys. The Baroness had taken herself off, and, when inquiries were made, it

was found that she was at Madrid. Mr. Snape, one of the lawyers, was the person who first informed Mr. Cœlebs, and did so in a manner which clearly implied that he expected Mr. Cœlebs to pay the bill. Then Mr. Snape encountered a terrible disappointment, and Mr. Cœlebs was driven to confess his own disgrace. He had, he said, never undertaken to pay the cost of the trial, but he had, unfortunately, given the lady a thousand pounds to enable her to pay the expenses herself. Mr. Snape expostulated, and, later on, urged with much persistency, that Mr. Cœlebs had more than once attended in person at the office of Messrs. Snape and Cashett. But in this matter the lawyers did not prevail. They had taken their orders from the lady, and must look to the lady for payment. They who best knew Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs thought that he had escaped cheaply, as there had been many fears that he should make the Baroness altogether his own.

"I am so glad she has gone," said Mary, when she heard the story. "I should never have felt safe while that woman was in the country. I'm quite sure of one thing: I'll never have anything more to do with disabilities. George need not be afraid about that."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NEWS COMES HOME

DURING those last days of the glory of the Baroness, when she was driving about London under the auspices of Philogunac Coelebs in her private brougham, and talking to everyone of the certainty of her coming success, Lord George Germain was not in London either to hear or to see what was going on. He had gone again to Naples, having received a letter from the British Consul there telling him that his brother was certainly dying. The reader will understand that he must have been most unwilling to take this journey. He at first refused to do so, alleging that his brother's conduct to him had severed all ties between them; but at last he allowed himself to be persuaded by the joint efforts of Mr. Knox, Mr. Stokes, and Lady Sarah, who actually came up to London herself for the purpose of inducing him to take the journey. "He is not only your brother," said Lady Sarah, "but the head of your family as well. It is not for the honour of the family that he should pass away without having someone belonging to him at the last moment." When Lord George argued that he would in all probability be too late, Lady Sarah explained that the last moments of a Marquis of Brotherton could not have come as long as his body was above ground.

So urged, the poor man started again, and found his brother still alive, but senseless. This was towards the end of March, and it is hoped that the reader

will remember the event which was to take place on the 1st of April. The coincidence of the two things added of course very greatly to his annoyance. Telegrams might come to him twice a day, but no telegram could bring him back in a flash when the moment of peril should arrive, or enable him to enjoy the rapture of standing at his wife's bedside when that peril should be over. He felt, as he went away from his brother's villa to the nearest hotel—for he would not sleep nor eat in the villa—that he was a man marked out for misfortune. When he returned to the villa on the next morning the Marquis of Brotherton was no more. His lordship had died in the forty-fourth year of his age, on the 30th March, 187—.

The Marquis of Brotherton was dead, and Lord George Germain was Marquis of Brotherton, and would be so called by all the world as soon as his brother was decently hidden under the ground. It concerns our story now to say that Mary Lovelace was Marchioness of Brotherton, and that the Dean of Brotherton was the father-in-law of a Marquis, and would, in all probability, be the progenitor of a long line of Marquises. Lord George, as soon as the event was known, caused telegrams to be sent to Mr. Knox, to Lady Sarah—and to the Dean. He had hesitated about the last, but his better nature at last prevailed. He was well aware that no one was so anxious as the Dean, and though he disliked and condemned the Dean's anxiety, he remembered that the Dean had at any rate been a loving father to his wife, and a very liberal father-in-law.

Mr. Knox, when he received the news, went at once to Mr. Stokes, and the two gentlemen were not

long in agreeing that a very troublesome and useless person had been removed out of the world. "Oh, yes; there's a will," said Mr. Stokes in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Knox, "made while he was in London the other day, just before he started—as bad a will as a man could make; but he couldn't do very much harm. Every acre was entailed."

"How about the house in town?" asked Mr. Knox.

"Entailed on the baby about to be born, if he happens to be a boy."

"He didn't spend his income?" suggested Mr. Knox.

"He muddled a lot of money away; but since the coal came up he couldn't spend it all, I should say."

"Who gets it?" asked Mr. Knox, laughing.

"We shall see that when the will is read," said the attorney with a smile.

The news was brought out to Lady Sarah as quick as the very wretched pony, which served for the Brotherton telegraph express, could bring it. The hour which was lost in getting the pony ready, perhaps, did not signify much. Lady Sarah at the moment was busy with her needle, and her sisters were with her. "What is it?" said Lady Susanna, jumping up. Lady Sarah, with cruel delay, kept the telegram for a moment in her hand. "Do open it," said Lady Amelia; "is it from George? Pray open it; pray do!" Lady Sarah, feeling certain of the contents of the envelope, and knowing the importance of the news, slowly opened the cover. "It is all over," she said. "Poor Brotherton!" Lady Amelia burst into tears. "He was never so very unkind to me," said Lady Susanna, with her handkerchief up to her eyes. "I cannot say that he was good to me," said Lady Sarah, "but it may be that I was hard

to him. May God Almighty forgive him all that he did amiss!"

Then there was a consultation held, and it was decided that Mary and the Marchioness must both be told at once. "Mamma will be dreadfully cut up," said Lady Susanna. Then Lady Amelia suggested that their mother's attention should be at once drawn off to Mary's condition, for the Marchioness at this time was much worried in her feelings about Mary—as to whom it now seemed that some error must have been made. The calculations had not been altogether exact. So at least, judging from Mary's condition, they all now thought at Manor Cross. Mrs. Toff was quite sure, and the Marchioness was perplexed in her memory as to certain positive information which had been whispered into her ear by Sir Henry just before the birth of that unfortunate Popenjoy, who was now lying dead as Lord Brotherton at Naples.

The telegram had arrived in the afternoon at the hour in which Mary was accustomed to sit in the easy-chair with the Marchioness. The penalty had now been reduced to an hour a day, and this, as it happened, was the hour. The Marchioness had been wandering a good deal in her mind. From time to time she expressed her opinion that Brotherton would get well and would come back; and she would then tell Mary how she ought to urge her husband to behave well to his elder brother, always asserting that George had been stiff-necked and perverse. But in the midst of all this she would refer every minute to Mary's coming baby as the coming Popenjoy—not a possible Popenjoy at some future time, but the immediate Popenjoy of the hour—to be born a Popenjoy!

Poor Mary, in answer to all this, would agree with everything. She never contradicted the old lady, but sat longing that the hour might come to an end.

Lady Sarah entered the room, followed by her two sisters. "Is there any news?" asked Mary.

"Has Brotherton come back?" demanded the Marchioness.

"Dear mamma!" said Lady Sarah—and she went up and knelt down before her mother and took her hand.

"Where is he?" asked the Marchioness.

"Dear mamma! He has gone away—beyond all trouble."

"Who has gone away?"

"Brotherton is—dead, mamma. This is a telegram from George." The old woman looked bewildered, as though she did not as yet quite comprehend what had been said to her. "You know," continued Lady Sarah, "that he was so ill that we all expected this."

"Expected what?"

"That my brother could not live."

"Where is George? What has George done? If George had gone to him—— Oh, me! Dead! He is not dead! And what has become of the child?"

"You should think of Mary, mamma."

"My dear, of course I think of you. I am thinking of nothing else. I should say it would be Friday. Sarah, you don't mean to say that Brotherton is—dead?" Lady Sarah merely pressed her mother's hand, and looked into the old lady's face. "Why did not they let me go to him? And is Popenjoy dead also?"

"Dear mamma, don't you remember?" said Lady Susanna.

"Yes; I remember. George was determined it should be so. Ah, me! ah, me! Why should I have lived to hear this?" After that it was in vain that they told her of Mary and of the baby that was about to be born. She wept herself into hysterics—was taken away and put to bed; and then soon wept herself to sleep.

Mary, during all this, had said not a word. She had felt that the moment of her exaltation—the moment in which she had become the mistress of the house and of everything around it—was not a time in which she could dare even to speak to the bereaved mother. But, when the two younger sisters had gone away with the Marchioness, she asked after her husband. Then Lady Sarah showed her the telegram in which Lord George, after communicating the death of his brother, had simply said that he should himself return home as quickly as possible. "It has come very quick," said Lady Sarah.

"What has come?"

"Your position, Mary. I hope—I hope you will bear it well."

"I hope so," said Mary almost sullenly. But she was awestruck, and not sullen.

"It will all be yours now—the rank, the wealth, the position, the power of spending money, and tribes of friends anxious to share your prosperity. Hitherto you have only seen the gloom of this place, which to you has of course been dull. Now it will be lighted up, and you can make it gay enough."

"This is not a time to think of gaiety," said Mary.

"Poor Brotherton was nothing to you. I do not think you ever saw him."

"Never."

"He was nothing to you. You cannot mourn."

"I do mourn. I wish he had lived. I wish the boy had lived. If you have thought that I wanted all this, you have done me wrong. I have wanted nothing but to have George to live with me. If anybody thinks that I married him because all this might come—oh, they do not know me."

"I know you, Mary."

"Then you will not believe that."

"I do not believe it. I have never believed it. I know that you are good and disinterested and true of heart. I have loved you dearly and more dearly as I have seen you every day. But, Mary, you are fond of what the world calls—pleasure."

"Yes," said Mary, after a pause, "I am fond of pleasure. Why not? I hope I am not fond of doing harm to anyone."

"If you will only remember how great are your duties. You may have children to whom you may do harm. You have a husband, who will now have many cares, and to whom much harm may be done. Among women you will be the head of a noble family, and may grace or disgrace them all by your conduct."

"I will never disgrace them," she said proudly.

"Not openly, not manifestly, I am sure. Do you think that there are no temptations in your way?"

"Everybody has temptations."

"Who will have more than you? Have you thought that every tenant, every labourer on the estate will have a claim on you?"

"How can I have thought of anything yet?"

"Don't be angry with me, dear, if I bid you think of it. I think of it—more, I know, than I ought to do. I have been so placed that I could do but little good and little harm to others than myself. The females of a family such as ours, unless they marry, are very insignificant in the world. You who but a few years ago were a little schoolgirl in Brotherton have now been put over all our heads."

"I didn't want to be put over anybody's head."

"Fortune has done it for you, and your own attractions. But I was going to say that, little as has been my power and low as is my condition, I have loved the family and striven to maintain its respectability. There is not, I think, a face on the estate I do not know. I shall have to go now and see them no more."

"Why should you go?"

"It will probably be proper. No married man likes to have his unmarried sisters in his house."

"I shall like you. You shall never go."

"Of course I shall go with mamma and the others. But I would have you sometimes think of me and those I have cared for, and I would have you bear in mind that the Marchioness of Brotherton should have more to do than to amuse herself."

Whatever assurances Mary might have made or have declined to make in answer to this were stopped by the entrance of a servant, who came to inform Lady George that her father was below. The Dean too had received his telegram, and had at once ridden over to greet the new Marchioness of Brotherton.

Of all those who first heard the news, the Dean's

feelings were by far the strongest. It cannot be said of any of the Germaines that there was sincere and abiding grief at the death of the late Marquis. The poor mother was in such a state, was mentally so weak, that she was in truth no longer capable of strong grief or strong joy. And the man had been not only so bad, but so injurious also, to all connected with him—had contrived of late to make his whole family so uncomfortable—that he had worn out even that enduring love which comes of custom. He had been a blister to them—assuring them constantly that he would ever be a blister; and they could not weep in their hearts because the blister was removed. But neither did they rejoice. Mary, when in her simple language she said that she did not want it, had spoken the plain truth. Munster Court, with her husband's love and the power to go to Mrs. Jones's parties, sufficed for her ambition. That her husband should be gentle with her, should caress her as well as love her, was all the world to her. She feared rather than coveted the title of Marchioness, and dreaded that gloomy house in the square with all her heart. But to the Dean the triumph was a triumph indeed, and the joy was a joy! He had set his heart upon it from the first moment in which Lord George had been spoken of as a suitor for his daughter's hand—looking forward to it with the assured hope of a very sanguine man. The late Marquis had been much younger than he, but he calculated that his own life had been wholesome, while that of the Marquis was the reverse. Then had come the tidings of the Marquis's marriage. That had been bad—but he had again told himself how probable it was that the Marquis should have no son. And

then the lord had brought home a son. All suddenly there had come to him the tidings that a brat called Popenjoy—a brat who in life would crush all his hopes—was already in the house at Manor Cross! He would not for a moment believe in the brat. He would prove that the boy was not Popenjoy, though he should have to spend his last shilling in doing so. He had set his heart upon the prize, and he would allow nothing to stand in his way.

And now the prize had come before his daughter had been two years married, before the grandchild was born on whose head was to be accumulated all these honours! There was no longer any doubt. The Marquis was gone, and that false Popenjoy was gone; and his daughter was the wife of the reigning lord, and the child—his grandchild was about to be born. He was sure that the child would be a boy! But even were a girl the eldest, there would be time enough for boys after that. There surely would be a real Popenjoy before long.

And what was he to gain—he himself? He often asked himself the question, but could always answer it satisfactorily. He had risen above his father's station by his own intellect and industry so high as to be able to exalt his daughter among the highest in the land. He could hardly have become a Marquis himself. That career could not have been open to him; but a sufficiency of the sweets of the peerage would be his own if he could see his daughter a Marchioness. And now that was her rank. Fate could not take it away from her. Though Lord George were to die to-morrow, she would still be a Marchioness, and the coming boy, his grandson, would be the Marquis. He himself was young for his age.

He might yet live to hear his grandson make a speech in the House of Commons as Lord Popenjoy.

He had been out about the city and received the telegram at three o'clock. He felt at the moment intensely grateful to Lord George for having sent it—as he would have been full of wrath had none been sent to him. There was no reference to "Poor Brotherton!" on his tongue; no reference to "Poor Brotherton!" in his heart. The man had grossly maligned his daughter to his own ears, had insulted him with bitter malignity, and was his enemy. He did not pretend to himself that he felt either sorrow or pity. The man had been a wretch and his enemy, and was now dead; and he was thoroughly glad that the wretch was out of his way. "Marchioness of Brotherton!" he said to himself, as he rested for a few minutes alone in his study. He stood with hands in his pockets, looking up at the ceiling, and realising it all. Yes; all that was quite true which had been said to himself more than once. He had begun his life as a stable-boy. He could remember the time when his father touched his hat to everybody that came into the yard. Nevertheless he was Dean of Brotherton—and so much a Dean as to have got the better of all enemies in the Close. And his daughter was Marchioness of Brotherton. She would be Mary to him, and would administer to his little comforts when men descended from the comrades of William the Conqueror would treat her with semi-regal respect. He told himself that he was sure of his daughter.

Then he ordered his horse, and started off to ride to Manor Cross. He did not doubt but that she knew it already, but still it was necessary that she should

hear it from his lips and he from hers. As he rode proudly beneath the Manor Cross oaks he told himself again and again that they would all belong to his grandson.

When the Dean was announced, Mary almost feared to see him—or rather feared that expression of triumph which would certainly be made both by his words and manner. All that Lady Sarah had said had entered into her mind. There were duties incumbent on her which would be very heavy, for which she felt that she could hardly be fit—and the first of these duties was to abstain from pride as to her own station in life. But her father, she knew, would be very proud, and would almost demand pride from her. She hurried down to him nevertheless. Were she ten times a Marchioness, next to her husband her care would be due to him. What daughter had even been beloved more tenderly than she? Administer to him! Oh, yes, she would do that as she had always done. She rushed into his arms in the little parlour and then burst into tears.

"My girl," he said, "I congratulate you."

"No—no, no."

"Yes, yes, yes. Is it not better in all ways that it should be so? I do congratulate you. Hold up your head, dear, and bear it well."

"Oh, papa, I shall never bear it well."

"No woman that was ever born has, I believe, borne it better than you will. No woman was ever more fit to grace a high position. My own girl!"

"Yes, papa, your own girl. But I wish—I wish——"

"All that I have wished has come about." She shuddered as she heard these words, remembering

that two deaths had been necessary for this fruition of his desires. But he repeated his words. "All that I have wished has come about. And, Mary, let me tell you this—you should in no wise be afraid of it, nor should you allow yourself to think of it as though there were anything to be regretted. Which do you believe would make the better peer—your husband or that man who has died?"

"Of course George is ten times the best."

"Otherwise he would be very bad. But no degree of comparison would express the difference. Your husband will add an honour to his rank." She took his hand and kissed it as he said this—which certainly would not have been said had not that telegram come direct to the Deanery. "And, looking to the future, which would probably make the better peer in coming years—the child born of that man and woman, and bred by them as they would have bred it, or your child—yours and your husband's? And here, in the country—from which lord would the tenants receive the stricter justice, and the people the more enduring kindness? Don't you know that he disgraced his order, and that the woman was unfit to bear the name which rightly or wrongly she had assumed? You will be fit."

"No, papa."

"Excuse me, dear. I am praising myself rather than you when I say—yes. But, though I praise myself, it is a matter as to which I have no shadow of doubt. There can be nothing to regret—no cause for sorrow. With the inmates of this house custom demands the decency of outward mourning; but there can be no grief of heart. The man was a wild beast,

destroying everybody and everything that came near him. Only think how he treated your husband."

"He is dead, papa."

"I thank God that he has gone. I cannot bring myself to lie about it. I hate such lying. To me it is unmanly. Grief or joy, regrets or satisfaction, when expressed, should always be true. It is a grand thing to rise in the world. The ambition to do so is the very salt of the earth. It is the parent of all enterprise, and the cause of all improvement. They who know no such ambition are savages and remain savage. As far as I can see, among us Englishmen such ambition is healthy and happily almost universal, and on that account we stand high among the citizens of the world. But, owing to false teaching, men are afraid to own aloud a truth which is known to their own hearts. I am not afraid to do so, and I would not have you afraid. I am proud that by one step after another I have been able so to place you and so to form you that you should have been found worthy of rank much higher than my own. And I would have you proud also and equally ambitious for your child. Let him be the Duke of Brotherton. Let him be brought up to be one of England's statesmen, if God shall give him intellect for the work. Let him be seen with the George and Garter, and be known throughout Europe as one of England's worthiest worthies. Though not born as yet, his career should already be a care to you. And that he may be great you should rejoice that you yourself are great already."

After that he went away, leaving messages for Lord George and the family. He bade her tell Lady Sarah that he would not intrude on the present occa-

sion, but that he hoped to be allowed to see the ladies of the family very shortly after the funeral.

Poor Mary could not but be bewildered by the difference of the two lessons she had received on this the first day of her assured honours. And she was the more perplexed because both her instructors had appeared to her to be right in their teaching. The pagan exaltation of her father at the death of his enemy she could put on one side, excusing it by the remembrance of the terrible insult which she knew that he had received. But the upshot of his philosophy she did receive as true, and she declared to herself that she would harbour in her heart of hearts the lessons which he had given her as to her own child, lessons which must be noble as they tended to the well-being of the world at large. To make her child able to do good to others, to assist in making him able and anxious to do so—to train him from the first in that way—what wish could be more worthy of a mother than this? But yet the humility and homely carefulness inculcated by Lady Sarah—was not that lesson also true? Assuredly, yes! And yet how should she combine the two?

She was unaware that within herself there was a power, a certain intellectual alembic of which she was quite unconscious, by which she could distil the good of each, and quietly leave the residuum behind her as being of no moment.

CHAPTER XXX

THE WILL

LORD GEORGE came back to England as quick as the trains would carry him, and with him came the sad and mournful burden which had to be deposited in the vaults of the parish church at Manor Cross. There must be a decent tombstone now that the life was gone, with decent words upon it, and a decent effigy—even though there had been nothing decent in the man's life. The long line of past Marquises must be perpetuated, and Frederic Augustus, the tenth peer of the name, must be made to lie with the others. Lord George therefore—for he was still Lord George till after the funeral—travelled with his sad burden, some deputy undertaker having special charge of it, and rested for a few hours in London. Mr. Knox met him in Mr. Stokes's chambers, and there he learned that his brother, who had made many wills in his time, had made one last will just before he left London, after his return from Rudham Park. Mr. Stokes took him aside, and told him that he would find the will to be unfavourable. "I thought the property was entailed," said Lord George very calmly. Mr. Stokes assented, with many assurances as to the impregnability of the family acres and the family houses; but added that there was money, and that the furniture had belonged to the late Marquis to dispose of as he pleased. "It is a matter of no consequence,"

said Lord George, whom the loss of the money and furniture did not in truth at all vex.

Early on the following morning he went down to Brotherton, leaving the undertakers to follow him as quickly as they might. He could enter the house now, and to him, as he was driven home under the oaks, no doubt there came some idea of his own possession of them. But the idea was much less vivid than the Dean's, and was chiefly confined to the recollection that no one could now turn him out of the home in which he had been born, and in which his mother and sisters and wife were living. Had his eldest brother been a man of whom he could have been proud, I almost think he would have been more contented as a younger brother. "It is over at last," were the first words he said to his wife, not finding it to be more important that his greatness was beginning than that his humiliation should be brought to an end.

The funeral took place with all the state that undertakers could give to it in a little village, but with no other honours. Lord George was the chief mourner and almost the only one. One or two neighbours came—Mr. de Baron, from Rudham Park, and such of the farmers as had been long on the land, among them being Mr. Price. But there was one person among the number whom no one had expected. This was Jack de Baron. "He has been mentioned in the will," said Mr. Stokes very gravely to Lord George, "and perhaps you would not object to my asking him to be present." Lord George did not object, though certainly Captain de Baron was the last person whom he would have thought of asking

to Manor Cross on any occasion. He was made welcome, however, with a grave courtesy.

"What on earth has brought you here?" said old Mr. de Baron to his cousin.

"Don't in the least know! Got a letter from a lawyer, saying I had better come. Thought everybody was to be here who had ever seen him."

"He hasn't left you money, Jack," said Mr. de Baron.

"What will you give for my chance?" said Jack. But Mr. de Baron, though he was much given to gambling speculations, did not on this occasion make an offer.

After the funeral, which was sadder even than funerals are in general though no tear was shed, the will was read in the library at Manor Cross, Lord George being present, together with Mr. Knox, Mr. Stokes, and the two De Barons. The Dean might have wished to be there; but he had written early on that morning an affectionate letter to his son-in-law, excusing himself from being present at the funeral. "I think you know," he had said, "that I would do anything either to promote your welfare or to gratify your feelings, but there had unfortunately been that between me and the late Marquis which would make my attendance seem to be a mockery." He did not go near Manor Cross on that day; but no one knew better than he—not even Mr. Knox himself—that the dead lord had possessed no power of alienating a stick or a brick upon the property. The will was very short, and the upshot of it was that every shilling of which the Marquis died possessed, together with his house at Como, and the furniture contained in the

three houses, was left to our old friend Jack de Baron. "I took the liberty," said Mr. Stokes, "to inform his lordship that should he die before his wife, his widow would be entitled to a third of his personal property. He replied that whatever his widow could claim by law, she could get without any act of his. I mention this, as Captain de Baron may perhaps be willing that the widow of the late Marquis may be at once regarded as possessed of a third of the property."

"Quite so," said Jack, who had suddenly become as solemn and funereal as Mr. Stokes himself. He was now engaged to Guss Mildmay with a vengeance.

When the solemnity of the meeting was over, Lord George—or the Marquis, as he must now be called—congratulated the young heir with exquisite grace. "I was so severed from my brother of late," he said, "that I had not known of the friendship."

"Never saw him in my life till I met him down at Rudham," said Jack. "I was civil to him there because he seemed to be ill. He sent me once to fetch a ten-pound note. I thought it odd, but I went. After that he seemed to take to me a good deal."

"He took to you to some purpose, Captain de Baron. As to me, I did not want it, and certainly should not have got it. You need not for a moment think that you are robbing us."

"That is so good of you," said Jack, whose thoughts however, were too full of Guss Mildmay to allow of any thorough enjoyment of his unexpected prosperity.

"Stokes says that after the widow is paid, and the legacy duty, there will be eight—and twenty—thousand pounds!" whispered Mr. de Baron to his relative. "By heavens! you are a lucky fellow."

"I am rather lucky."

"It will be fourteen hundred a year, if you only look out for a good investment. A man with ready money at his own disposal can always get five per cent. at least. I never heard of such a fluke in my life."

"It was a fluke, certainly."

"You'll marry now and settle down, I suppose?"

"I suppose I shall," said Jack. "One has to come to that kind of thing at last. I knew when I was going to Rudham that some d——d thing would come of it. Oh—of course I'm awfully glad. It's sure to come sooner or later, and I suppose I've had my run. I've just seen Stokes, and he says I'm to go to him in about a month's time. I thought I should have got some of it to-morrow."

"My dear fellow, I can let you have a couple of hundreds, if you want them," said Mr. de Baron, who had never hitherto been induced to advance a shilling when his young cousin had been needy.

Mr. Stokes, Mr. Knox, Mr. de Baron, and the heir went away, leaving the family to adjust their own affairs in their new position. Then Mary received a third lecture as she sat leaning upon her husband's shoulder.

"At any rate, you won't have to go away any more," she had said to him. "You have been always away, for ever so long."

"It was you who would go to the Deanery when you left London."

"I know that. Of course I wanted to see papa then. I don't want to talk about that any more. Only you won't go away again?"

"When I do you shall go with me."

"That won't be going away. Going away is taking yourself off—by yourself."

"Could I help it?"

"I don't know. I could have gone with you. But it's over now, isn't it?"

"I hope so."

"It shall be over. And when this other trouble is done—you'll go to London then?"

"It will depend on your health, dear."

"I am very well. Why shouldn't I be well? When a month is over—then you'll go."

"In two months, perhaps."

"That'll be the middle of June. I'm sure I shall be well in three weeks. And where shall we go? We'll go to Munster Court—shan't we?"

"As soon as the house is ready in St. James's Square, we must go there."

"Oh, George, I do so hate that house in St. James's Square. I shall never be happy there. It's like a prison."

Then he gave her his lecture. "My love, you should not talk of hating things that are necessary."

"But why is St. James's Square necessary?"

"Because it is the town residence belonging to the family. Munster Court was very well for us as we were before. Indeed, it was much too good, as I felt every hour that I was there. It was more than we could afford without drawing upon your father for assistance."

"But he likes being drawn upon," said Mary. "I don't think there is anything papa likes so much as to be drawn upon."

"That could make no difference to me, my dear.

I don't think that as yet you understand money matters."

"I hope I never shall, then."

"I hope you will. It will be your duty to do so. But, as I was saying, the house at Munster Court will be unsuitable to you as Lady Brotherton." On hearing this Mary pouted and made a grimace. "There is a dignity to be borne which, though it may be onerous, must be supported."

"I hate dignity."

"You would not say that if you knew how it vexed me. Could I have chosen for myself personally, perhaps, neither would I have taken this position. I do not think that I am by nature ambitious. But a man is bound to do his duty in that position in which he finds himself placed—and so is a woman."

"And it will be my duty to live in an ugly house?"

"Perhaps the house may be made less ugly; but to live in it will certainly be a part of your duty. And if you love me, Mary——"

"Do you want me to tell you whether I love you?"

"But, loving me as I know you do, I am sure you will not neglect your duty. Do not say again that you hate your dignity. You must never forget now that you are Marchioness of Brotherton."

"I never shall, George."

"That is right, my dear," he said, omitting to understand the little satire conveyed in her words. "It will come easy to you before long. But I would have all the world feel that you are the mistress of the rank to which you have been raised. Of course, it has been different hitherto," he said, endeavouring in his own mind to excuse the indiscretion of that Kappa-kappa. This lecture also she turned to whole-

some food and digested, obtaining from it some strength and throwing off the bombast by which a weaker mind might have been inflated. She understood, at any rate, that St. James's Square must be her doom; but while acknowledging this to herself, she made a little resolution that a good deal would have to be done to the house before it was ready for her reception, and that the doing would require a considerable time.

When she heard the purport of the late lord's will she was much surprised—more surprised, probably, than Jack himself. Why should a man who was so universally bad—such a horror—leave his money to one who was so—so—so good as Jack de Baron? The epithet came to her at last in preference to any other. And what would he do now? George had told her that the sum would be very large, and of course he could marry if he pleased. At any rate he would not go to Perim. The idea that he should go to Perim had made her uncomfortable. Perhaps he had better marry Guss Mildmay. She was not quite all that his wife should be; but he had said that he would do so in certain circumstances. Those circumstances had come round, and it was right that he should keep his word. And yet it made her somewhat melancholy to think that he should marry Guss Mildmay.

Very shortly after this, and when she was becoming aware that the event which ought to have taken place on the 1st of April would not be much longer delayed, there came home to her various things containing lectures almost as severe and perhaps more eloquent than those she had received from her sister-in-law, her father, and her husband. There was an infinity of clothes which someone had ordered for her,

and on all the things which would bear a mark there was a coronet. The coronets on the pocket-handkerchiefs seemed to be without end. And there was funeral note-paper, on which the black edges were not more visible than the black coronets. And there came invoices to her from the tradesmen, addressed to the Marchioness of Brotherton. And then there came the first letter from her father with her rank and title on the envelope. At first she was almost afraid to open it.

CHAPTER XXXI

POPENJOY IS BORN—AND CHRISTENED

At last, not much above a week after the calculations, in all the glory of the purple of Manor Cross, the new Popenjoy was born. For it was a Popenjoy. The Fates, who had for some time past been unpropitious to the house of Brotherton, now smiled; and Fortune, who had been good to the Dean throughout, remained true to him also in this. The family had a new heir, a real Popenjoy; and the old Marchioness, when the baby was shown to her, for awhile forgot her sorrows and triumphed with the rest.

The Dean's anxiety had been so great that he had insisted on remaining at the house. It had been found impossible to refuse such a request made at such a time. And now, at last, the ladies at Manor Cross gradually forgave the Dean his offences. To the old dowager they did not mention his name, and she probably forgot his existence; but the Marquis appeared to live with him on terms of perfect friendship, and the sisters succumbed to the circumstances and allowed themselves to talk to him as though he were in truth the father of the reigning Marchioness.

It will be understood that for forty-eight hours before the birth of the child and for forty-eight hours afterwards all Manor Cross was moved in the matter, as though this were the first male child born into the world since the installation of some new golden age. It was a great thing that, after all the recent troubles,

a Popenjoy—a proper Popenjoy—should be born at Manor Cross of English parents—a healthy boy—a bouncing little lord, as Mrs. Toff called him; and the event almost justified the prophetic spirit in which his grandmother spoke of this new advent. “Little angel!” she said. “I know he’ll grow up to bring new honours to the family, and do as much for it as his great-grandfather.” The great-grandfather spoken of had been an earl, great in borough-mongery, and had been made a Marquis by Pitt on the score of his votes. “George,” she went on to say, “I do hope there will be bells and bonfires, and that the tenants will be allowed to see him.” There were bells and bonfires. But in these days tenants are perhaps busier men than formerly, and have less in them certainly of the spirit of heir-worship than their fathers. But Mr. Price, with his bride, did come down and see the baby; on which occasion the gallant husband bade his wife remember that although they had been married more than twelve months after Lord George, their baby would only be three months younger. Whereupon Mrs. Price boxed her husband’s ears—to the great delight of Mrs. Toff, who was dispensing sherry and cherry brandy in her own sitting-room.

The Dean’s joy, though less ecstatic in its expression, was quite as deep and quite as triumphant as that of the Marchioness. When he was admitted for a moment to his daughter’s bedside, the tears rolled down his face as he prayed for a blessing for her and her baby. Lady Sarah was in the room, and began to doubt whether she had read the man’s character aright. There was an ineffable tenderness about him, a sweetness of manner, a low melody of voice,

a gracious solemnity in which piety seemed to be mingled with his love and happiness! That he was an affectionate father had been always known; but now it had to be confessed that he bore himself as though he had sprung from some noble family or been the son and grandson of archbishops. How it would have been with him on such an occasion had his daughter married some vicar of Pugsty, as she herself once suggested, Lady Sarah did not now stop to inquire. It was reasonable to Lady Sarah that the coming of a Popenjoy should be hailed with greater joy and receive a warmer welcome than the birth of any ordinary baby. "You have had a great deal to bear, Brotherton," he said, holding his noble son-in-law by the hand; "but I think that this will compensate for it all." The tears were still in his eyes, and they were true tears—tears of most unaffected joy. He had seen the happy day; and as he told himself in words which would have been profane had they been absolutely uttered, he was now ready to die in peace. Not that he meant to die, or thought that he should die. That vision of young Popenjoy, bright as a star, beautiful as a young Apollo, with all the golden glories of the aristocracy upon his head, standing up in the House of Commons and speaking to the world at large with modest but assured eloquence, while he himself occupied some corner in the gallery, was still before his eyes.

After all, who should say that the man was selfish? He was contented to shine with a reflected honour. Though he was wealthy, he never desired grand doings at the Deanery. In his own habits he was simple. The happiness of his life had been to see his daughter happy. His very soul had smiled within

him when she had smiled in his presence. But he had been subject to one weakness, which had marred a manliness which would otherwise have been great. He, who should have been proud of the lowliness of his birth, and have known that the brightest feather in his cap was the fact that having been humbly born he had made himself what he was—he had never ceased to be ashamed of the stable-yard. And as he felt himself to be degraded by that from which he had sprung, so did he think that the only whitewash against such dirt was to be found in the aggrandisement of his daughter and the nobility of her children. He had, perhaps, been happier than he deserved. He might have sold her to some lord who would have scorned her after awhile and despised himself. As it was, the Marquis who was his son-in-law was a man whom, upon the whole, he could well trust. Lord George had indeed made one little error in regard to Mrs. Houghton; but that had passed away, and would not probably be repeated.

Of all those closely concerned in the coming of Popenjoy the father seemed to bear the greatness of the occasion with the most modesty. When the Dean congratulated him, he simply smiled and expressed a hope that Mary would do well in her troubles. Poor Mary's welfare had hitherto been almost lost in the solicitude for her son. "She can't but do well now," said the Dean, who of all men was the most sanguine. "She is thoroughly healthy, and nothing has been amiss."

"We must be very careful—that's all," said the Marquis. Hitherto he had not brought his tongue to speak of his son as Popenjoy, and did not do so for many a day to come. That an heir had been born

was very well; but of late the name of Popenjoy had not been sweet to his ears.

Nothing had gone amiss, and nothing did go amiss. When it was decided that the young Marchioness was to nurse her own baby—a matter which Mary took into her own hands with a very high tone—the old Marchioness became again a little troublesome. She had her memories about it all in her own time; how she had not been able to do as Mary was doing. She remembered all that, and how unhappy it had made her; but she remembered also that, had she done so for Popenjoy, Sir Henry would have insisted on three pints of porter. Then Mary rebelled altogether, and talked of drinking nothing but tea—and would not be brought to consent even to bitter beer without a great deal of trouble. But, through it all, the mother throve and the baby throve; and when the bonfires had been all burned and the bells had been all rung, and the child had been shown to such tenants and adherents and workmen as desired to see him, the family settled down to a feeling of permanent satisfaction.

And then came the christening. Now in spite of the permanent satisfaction there were troubles—troubles of which the Marquis became conscious very soon, and which he was bound to communicate to his sister—troubles of which the Dean was unfortunately cognisant, and of which he would speak, and with which he would concern himself—much to the annoyance of the Marquis. The will which the late man had made was a serious temporary embarrassment. There was no money with which to do anything. The very bed on which the mother lay with her baby belonged to Jack de Baron. They were

absolutely drinking Jack de Baron's port-wine, and found, when the matter came to be considered, that they were making butter from Jack de Baron's cows. This could not be long endured. Jack, who was now bound to have a lawyer of his own, had very speedily signified his desire that the family should be put to no inconvenience, and had declared that any suggestion from the Marquis as to the house in town or that in the country would be a law to him. But it was necessary that everything should be valued at once, and either purchased or given up to be sold to those who would purchase it. There was, however, no money, and the Marquis, who hated the idea of borrowing, was told that he must go among the money-lenders. Then the Dean proposed that he and Miss Tallowax between them might be able to advance what was needed. The Marquis shook his head and said nothing. The proposition had been very distasteful to him.

Then there came another proposition. But it will be right, in the first place, to explain that the great question of godfather and godmother had received much attention. His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor had signified through young Lord Brabazon that he would stand as one of the sponsors. The honour had been very great, and had of course been accepted at the moment. The Dean had hankered much after the office, but had abstained from asking with a feeling that, should the request be refused, a coolness would be engendered which he himself would be unable to repress. It would have filled him with delight to stand in his own cathedral as godfather to the little Popenjoy; but he abstained, and soon heard

that the Duke of Dunstable, who was a distant cousin, was to be the colleague of His Royal Highness. He smiled and said nothing of himself—but thought that his liberality might have been more liberally remembered.

Just at this time Miss Tallowax arrived at the Deanery, and on the next morning the Dean came over to Manor Cross with a proposition from that lady. She would bestow twenty thousand pounds immediately upon Popenjoy, and place it for instant use in the father's hands, on condition that she might be allowed to stand as godmother!

"We could not consent to accept the money," said the Marquis very gravely.

"Why not? Mary is her nearest living relative in that generation. As a matter of course she will leave her money to Mary or her children—unless she be offended. Nothing is so common as for old people with liberal hearts to give away the money which they must soon leave behind them. A more generous creature than my old aunt doesn't live."

"Very generous; but I am afraid we cannot accept it."

"After all, it is only an empty honour. I would not ask it for myself, because I knew how you might be situated. But I really think you might gratify the old lady. Twenty thousand pounds is an important sum, and would be so useful just at present!"

This was true, but the father at the moment declined. The Dean, however, who knew his man, determined that the money should not be lost, and communicated with Mr. Knox. Mr. Knox came down to Manor Cross and held a long consultation at which both the Dean and Lady Sarah were present. "Let

it be granted," said the Dean, "that it is a foolish request; but are you justified in refusing twenty thousand pounds offered to Popenjoy?"

"Certainly," said Lady Sarah, "if the twenty thousand pounds is a bribe."

"But it is no bribe, Lady Sarah," said Mr. Knox. "It is not unreasonable that Miss Tallowax should give her money to her great-nephew, nor is it unreasonable that she should ask for this honour, seeing that she is the child's great-aunt." There was a strong opposition to Miss Tallowax's liberal offer—but in the end it was accepted. The twenty thousand pounds was important, and after all the godmother could do no lasting injury to the child. Then it was discovered that the offer was clogged with a further stipulation. The boy must be christened Tallowax! To this father and mother and aunts all objected, swearing that they would not subject their young Popenjoy to so great an injury—till it was ascertained that the old lady did not insist on Tallowax as a first name, or even as a second. It would suffice that Tallowax should be inserted among others. It was at last decided that the boy should be christened Frederic Augustus Tallowax. Thus he became Frederic Augustus Tallowax Germain—commonly to be called, by the Queen's courtesy, Lord Popenjoy. The christening itself was not very august, as neither the Royal Duke nor his fellow-sponsor attended in person. The Dean stood proxy for the one, and Canon Holdenough for the other.

Mary by this time was able to leave her room, and was urgent with her husband to take her up to London. Had she not been very good, and done all that she was told—except in regard to the porter?

And was it not manifest to everybody that she would be able to travel to St. Petersburg and back if such a journey were required? Her husband assured her that she would be tired out before she got half way. "But London isn't a tenth part of the distance," said Mary, with a woman's logic. Then it was settled that on the 20th of May she should be taken with her baby to Munster Court. The following are a few of the letters of congratulation which she received during the period of her convalescence.

"Grosvenor Place.

"MY DEAR MARCHIONESS,—Of course I have heard all about you from time to time, and of course I have been delighted. In the first place, we none of us could grieve very much for that unfortunate brother of yours. Really it was so very much better for everybody that Lord George should have the title and property—not to talk of all the advantage which the world expects from a young and fascinating Lady Brotherton. I am told that the scaffolding is already up in St. James's Square. I drove through the place the other day, and bethought myself how long it might be before I should receive the honour of a card telling me that on such and such a day the Marchioness of Brotherton would be at home. I should not suggest such a thing but for the dearly-kind expression in your last letter.

"But the baby of course is the first object. Pray tell me what sort of a baby it is. Two arms and two legs, I know, for even a young Popenjoy is not allowed to have more; but of his special graces you might send me a catalogue, if you have as yet been allowed pen and paper. I can believe that a good

deal of mild tyranny would go on with those estimable sisters, and that Lord George would be anxious. I beg his pardon—the Marquis. Don't you find this second change in your name very perplexing—particularly in regard to your linen? All your nice wedding things will have become wrong so soon!

“And now I can impart a secret. There are promises of a little Giblet. Of course it is premature to speak with certainty; but why shouldn't there be a little Giblet as well as a little Popenjoy? Only it won't be a Giblet as long as dear old Lord Gossling can keep the gout out of his stomach. They say that in anger at his son's marriage he has forsworn champagne and confines himself to two bottles of claret a day. But Giblet, who is the happiest young man of my acquaintance, says that his wife is worth it all.

“And so our friend the Captain is a millionaire! What will he do? Wasn't it an odd will? I couldn't be altogether sorry, for I have a little corner in my heart for the Captain, and would have left him something myself if I had anything to leave. I really think he had better marry his old love. I like justice, and that would be just. He would do it to-morrow if you told him. It might take me a month of hard work. How much is it he gets? I hear such various sums—from a hundred thousand down to as many hundreds. Nevertheless, the will proves the man to have been mad—as I always said he was.

“I suppose you'll come to Munster Court till the house in the square is finished. Or will you take some furnished place for a month or two? Munster Court is small; but it was very pretty, and I hope I may see it again.

"Kiss the little Popenjoy for me, and believe me to be,

"Dear Lady Brotherton,

"Your affectionate old friend,

"G. MONTACUTE JONES."

The next was from their friend the Captain himself:

"DEAR LADY BROTHERTON,—I hope it won't be wrong in me to congratulate you on the birth of your baby. I do so with all my heart. I hope that some day, when I am an old foggy, I may be allowed to know him and remind him that in old days I used to know his mother. I was down at Manor Cross the other day; but of course on such an occasion I could not see you. I was sent for because of that strange will; but it was more strange to me that I should so soon find myself in your house. It was not very bright on that occasion.

"I wonder who was surprised most by the will—you or I?" [Mary, when she read this, declared to herself that she ought not to have been surprised at all. How could anyone be surprised by what such a man as that might do?] "He had never seen me, as far as I know, till he met me at Rudham. I did not want his money—though I was poor enough. I don't know what I shall do now; but I shan't go to Perim.

"Mrs. Jones says you will soon be in town. I hope I may be allowed to call.

"Believe me always,

"Most sincerely yours,

"JOHN DE BARON."

Both those letters gave her pleasure, and both she

answered. To all Mrs. Jones's inquiries she gave very full replies, and enjoyed her jokes with her old friend. She hinted that she did not at all intend to hurry the men at St. James's Square, and that certainly she would be found in Munster Court till the men had completed their work. As to what their young friend would do with his money, she could say nothing. She could not undertake the commission—though that perhaps might be best—and so on. Her note to Jack was very short. She thanked him heartily for his good wishes, and told him the day on which she would be in Munster Court. Then in a postscript she said that she was "*very, very glad*," that he had inherited the late lord's money.

The other letter offended her as much as those two had pleased her. It offended her so much that when she saw the handwriting she would not have read it but that curiosity forbade her to put it on one side. It was from Adelaide Houghton, and as she opened it there was a sparkle of anger in her eyes which perhaps none of her friends had ever seen there. This letter was as follows:

"DEAR LADY BROTHERTON,—Will you not at length allow bygones to be bygones? What can a poor woman do more than beg pardon and promise never to be naughty again. Is it worth while that we, who have known each other so long, should quarrel about what really amounted to nothing? It was but a little foolish romance, the echo of a past feeling—a folly if you will, but innocent. I own my fault and put on the sackcloth and ashes of confession, and, after that surely you will give me absolution.

"And now, having made my apology, which I trust

will be accepted, pray let me congratulate you on all your happiness. The death of your poor brother-in-law of course we have all expected. Mr. Houghton had heard a month before that it was impossible that he should live. Of course, we all feel that the property has fallen into much better hands. And I am so glad that you have a boy. Dear little Popenjoy! Do, do forgive me, so that I may have an opportunity of kissing him. I am, at any rate,

“Your affectionate old friend,

“ADELAIDE HOUGHTON.”

Affectionate old friend! Serpent! Toad! Nasty, degraded, painted Jezebel! Forgive her! No—never; not though she were on her knees! She was contemptible before, but doubly contemptible in that she could humble herself to make an apology so false, so feeble, and so fawning. It was thus that she regarded her correspondent's letter. Could any woman who knew that love-letters had been written to her husband by another woman forgive that other? We are all conscious of trespassers against ourselves whom we especially bar when we say our prayers. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us—excepting Jones, who has committed the one sin that we will not forgive, that we ought not to forgive. Is there not that sin against the Holy Ghost to justify us? This was the sin that Mary could not forgive. The disgusting woman—for to Mary the woman was now absolutely disgusting—had attempted to take from her the heart of her husband! There was a good deal of evidence also against her husband, but that she had quite forgotten. She did not in the least believe that Adelaide was preferred to herself. Her

husband had eyes, and could see—a heart, and could feel—an understanding, and could perceive. She was not in the least afraid as to her husband. But nothing on earth should induce her to forgive Mrs. Houghton. She thought for a moment whether it was worth her while to show the letter to the Marquis, and then tore it into fragments and threw the pieces away.

CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSION

It is now only necessary that we should collect together the few loose threads of our story which require to be tied lest the pieces should become unravelled in the wear. Of our hero, Lord Popenjoy, it need only be said that when we last heard of him he was a very healthy and rather mischievous boy of five years old, who tyrannised over his two little sisters—the Lady Mary and the Lady Sarah. Those, however, who look most closely to his character think that they can see the germs of that future success which his grandfather so earnestly desires for him. His mother is quite sure that he will live to be Prime Minister, and has already begun to train him for that office. The house in Munster Court has of course been left, and the Marchioness was on one occasion roused into avowing that the family mansion is preferable. But then the family mansion has been so changed that no Germain of a former generation would know it. The old dowager, who still lives at Manor Cross, has never seen the change; but Lady Sarah, who always spends a month or two in town, pretends to disbelieve that it is the same house. One of the events in Mary's life which astonishes her most is the perfect friendship which exists between her and her eldest sister-in-law. She corresponds regularly with Lady Sarah, and is quite content to have her letters filled with the many

ailments and scanty comforts of the poor people on the estate. Lady Sarah is more than content to be able to love the mother of the heir, and she does love her, and the boy too, with all her heart. Now that there is a Popenjoy—a coming Brotherton, of whom she can be proud—she finds nothing in her own life with which she ought to quarrel. The Ladies Susanna and Amelia also come up to town every year, very greatly to their satisfaction, and are most devoted to the young Marchioness. But the one guest who is honoured above all others in St. James's Square, for whose comfort everything is made to give way, whom not to treat with loving respect is to secure a banishment from the house, whom all the servants are made to regard as a second master, is the Dean. His lines have certainly fallen to him in pleasant places. No woman in London is more courted and more popular than the Marchioness of Brotherton, and consequently the Dean spends his two months in London very comfortably. But perhaps the happiest period of his life is the return visit which his daughter always makes to him for a fortnight during the winter. At this period the Marquis will generally pass a couple of days at the Deanery, but for the greater part of the time the father and daughter are alone together. Then he almost worships her. Up in London he allows himself to be worshipped with an exquisite grace. To Mrs. Houghton the Marchioness has never spoken, and on that subject she is inexorable. Friends have interceded, but such intercession has only made matters worse. Of what nature must the woman be who could speak to any friend of such an offence as she had committed? The Marchioness, in refusing to be reconciled, has never alluded to the cause of her anger, but

has shown her anger plainly and has persistently refused to abandon it.

The Marquis has become a model member of the House of Lords. He is present at all their sittings, and is indefatigably patient on committees—but very rarely speaks. In this way he is gradually gaining weight in the country, and when his hair is quite grey and his step less firm than at present he will be an authority in Parliament. He is also a pattern landlord, listening to all complaints, and endeavouring in everything to do justice between himself and those who are dependent on him. He is also a pattern father, expecting great things from Popenjoy, and resolving that the child shall be subjected to proper discipline as soon as he is transferred from feminine to virile teaching. In the meantime the Marchioness reigns supreme in the nursery—as it is proper that she should do.

The husband now never feels himself called upon to remind his wife to support her dignity. Since the dancing of the Kappa-kappa she has never danced, except when, on grand occasions, she had walked through a quadrille with some selected partner of special rank; and this she does simply as a duty. Nevertheless, in society she is very gay and very joyous. But dancing has been a peril to her, and she avoids it altogether, pleading to such friends as Mrs. Jones that a woman with a lot of babies is out of place capering about a room. Mrs. Jones remembers the Kappa-kappa, and says little or nothing on the subject, but she heartily dissents from her friend, and still hopes that there may be a good time coming. The Marquis remembers it all too, and is thoroughly thankful to his wife, showing his gratitude every now and

then by suggesting that Captain and Mrs. de Baron may be asked to dinner. He knows that there is much for which he has to be grateful. Though the name of Mrs. Houghton is never on his tongue, he had not forgotten the way in which he went astray in Berkeley Square—nor the sweet reticence of his wife, who has never thrown his fault in his teeth since that day on which, at his bidding, she took the letter from his pocket and read it. No man in London is better satisfied with his wife than the Marquis, and perhaps no man in London has better cause to be satisfied.

Yes! Captain de Baron—and his wife—do occasionally dine together in St. James's Square. Whether it was that Mrs. Montacute Jones was successful in her efforts, or that Guss was enabled to found arguments on Jack's wealth which Jack was unable to oppose, or that a sense of what was due to the lady prevailed with him at last, he did marry her about a twelvemonth after the reading of the will. When the Marchioness came to town—before Popenjoy was born—he called, and was allowed to see her. Nothing could be more respectful than was his demeanour then, nor than it had been ever since; and when he announced to his friend, as he did in person, that he was about to be married to Miss Mildmay, she congratulated him with warmth, not saying a word as to past occurrences. But she determined that she would ever be his friend, and for his sake she has become friendly also to his wife. She never really liked poor Guss—nor perhaps does the Captain. But there have been no quarrels, at any rate no public quarrels, and Jack has done his duty in a manner that rather surprised his old acquaintances. But he is a much altered man, and is growing fat, and has taken to playing whist at his club before dinner for

shilling points. I have always thought that in his heart of hearts he regrets the legacy.

Whether to spite his son, or at the urgent entreaty of his wife and doctors, Lord Gossling has of late been so careful that the gout has not had a chance of getting into his stomach. Lord Giblet professes himself to be perfectly satisfied with things as they are. He has already four children. He lives in a small house in Green Street, and is a member of the Entomological Society. He is so strict in his attendance that it is thought that he will some day be president. But the old lord does not like this turn in his son's life, and says that the family of De Geese must be going to the dogs when the heir has nothing better to do than to attend to insects.

Mrs. Montacute Jones gives as many parties as ever in Grosvenor Place, and is never so well pleased as when she can get the Marchioness of Brotherton to her house. She is still engaged in matrimonial pursuits, and is at the present moment full of an idea that the Minister from Saxony, who is a fine old gentleman of sixty, but a bachelor, may be got to marry Lady Amelia Germain. Mary assures her that there isn't the least chance—that Amelia would certainly not accept him—and that an old German of sixty, used to diplomacy all his life, is the last man in the world to be led into difficulties. But Mrs. Jones never gives way in such matters, and has already made the plans for a campaign at Killancodlem next August.

I regret to state that Messrs. Snape and Cashett have persecuted the poor Baroness most cruelly. They have contrived to show that the lady has not only got into their debt, but has also swindled them—swindled them according to law—and consequently

they have been able to set all the police of the Continent on her track. She had no sooner shown her face back in Germany than they were upon her. For awhile she escaped, rushing from one country to another, but at last she was arrested on a platform in Oregon, and is soon about to stand her trial in an English court. As a good deal of sympathy has been expressed in her favour, and as Mr. Philogunac Coelebs has taken upon himself the expense of her defence, it is confidently hoped in many quarters that no jury will convict her. In the meantime, Dr. Fleabody has, I am told, married a storekeeper in New York, and has settled down into a good mother of a family.

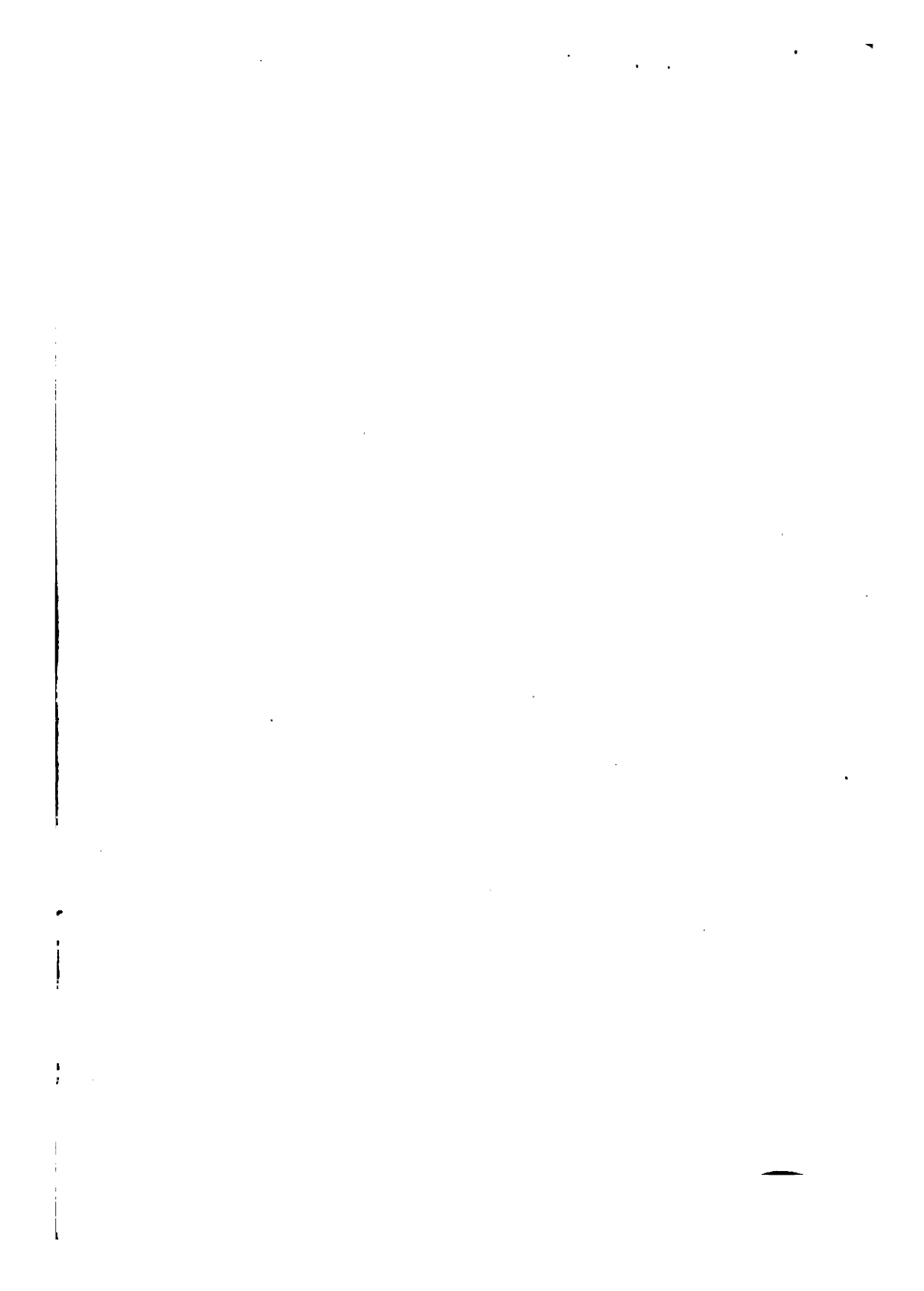
At Manor Cross during the greater portion of the year things go on very much as they used. The Marchioness is still living, and interests herself chiefly in the children of her daughter-in-law—born, and to be born. But the great days of her life are those in which Popenjoy is brought to her. The young scapegrace will never stay above five minutes with his grandmother, but the old lady is sure that she is regarded by him with a love passing the love of children. At Christmas time, and for a week or two before, and a month or two afterwards, the house is full of company and bright with unaccustomed lights. Lady Sarah puts on her newest silk, and the Marchioness allows herself to be brought into the drawing-room after dinner. But at the end of February the young family flits to town, and then the Manor Cross is as Manor Cross so long has been.

Mr. Price still hunts, and is as popular in the county as ever. He often boasts that although he was married much after the Marquis, the youngest of his

three children is older than Lady Mary. But when he does this at home, his ears are always boxed for him.

Of Mr. Groschut it is only necessary to say that he is still at Pugsty, vexing the souls of his parishioners by Sabbatical denunciations.

THE END



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